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FIRST THINGS

MAY 2000
NUMBER 103

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The Return of Political Philosophy

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To Wonder Again

PAUL J. GRIFFITHS
The Very Idea of Religion

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
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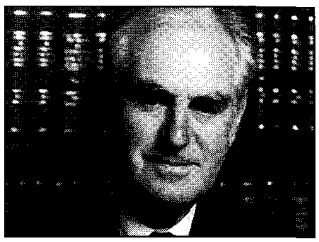

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Market or Moral Failure?

The seductive appeal of communism, according to Brian C. Anderson ("Capitalism and the Suicide of Culture," February), was its coupling of the "inherently incompatible ideas of human volition and the science of history." One could say that today the West offers a similar seductive antinomy in its coupling of cynicism and sentimentality.

One the one hand, the West proffers a tough, no-nonsense, pragmatic view of the world where spirited competition leads to a better and healthier society. On the other hand, it indulges in an orgy of sentimentality that seeks to harmonize all opposing points of view and to legitimize every right and every choice.

The great irony of the Cold War, considering that communism lost, was that it was, in the main, fought on Hegelian/Marxist-inspired grounds. It was our materialism against theirs. Both sides combined a blind confidence in science and progress with a negative attitude towards traditional values and authority. Is it any wonder that Solzhenitsyn was rejected by both the East and the West? And should we be surprised that the Hegel-inspired Francis Fukuyama is now seen as a prophet the world over? Rocco Buttiglione is right to see atheism as the dirty little secret behind both systems.

The three books (by François Furet, John Gray, and Fukuyama) so ably reviewed by Mr. Anderson each offered a valuable perspective on the twentieth century. But there have been many such books. What that century really needed was a writer like Dostoevsky who could unpack its soul.

Bob Hill
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada

I thank Brian C. Anderson for his analysis of recent books on whether markets can be blamed for the moral breakdown of modern society. His exposure of Francis Fukuyama's unoriginal *The Great Disruption* as essentially reductionist Marxism is insightful. I agree that both business culture (advertising) and high culture (art, literature, philosophy, and theology) have become corrupted by opportunistic nihilism. These corruptions might be termed excesses of the market. Mr. Anderson offers antidotes such as the possibility of religious revival, the recovery of high culture, and "postliberal" policies for fighting crime, with all of which I agree.

But such cultural reforms will have limited effect unless government social policy is also reformed. Policy making in the Clinton era revolves around creating political constituencies that markets "discriminate" against. Thus, female college athletes, homosexuals in the military, professors of multiculturalism, affirmative action appointees, and pseudoscientific environmentalists are given political patronage that the market wouldn't recognize. Social policy carves out "ascribed roles," whereas markets dictate "achieved roles." Conversely, the "professional class" of medicine, law, and accounting has been "deregulated," leaving its practitioners to push on the public dubiously beneficial cosmetic surgery, frivolous lawsuits, and financial planning.

If egalitarian social policy follows any one guiding "moral" principle, it is to justify government intervention to overcome "market failure." This creates a countercultural "new class" whose members must continually play the gender, race, class, and enviro cards to justify their existence because markets do not favor them.

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Along with this come falsifications and distortions about human nature, society, the physical environment, and Western Civilization. Any moral reawakening must be accompanied by a return to markets, truth-telling institutions, and neutrality as a basis of social policy.

The Clinton Administration was politically able to trade market reforms of social welfare programs (where there are fewer well-organized voters) for egalitarian policies in the labor market, college athletics, academia, and the military (where voters can be organized). However, Clintonian social policy has been to push markets (choice) when it comes to abortion. Although capitalism raises living standards, generally markets aren't good for children or the unborn.

This marketizing of the micro level (families) and politicizing of the macro level (job programs) results in moral disruption and social suicide. Interestingly, the crucial mezzo level of culture and mediating institutions has often been corrupted by both markets and politicization. In this sense, to overcome social corruption we must instill a market component in social policy at the macro level. Conversely, we must reinstill religious/cultural values at the micro and mezzo levels.

As Daniel Patrick Moynihan pointed out decades ago, the historical breakdown of the black family resulted more from "government failure" than from market failure. And as Mr. Anderson correctly observes, we must rid the mezzo level of culture of market nihilism. Of course, markets and governments are imperfect, and we live in a fallen world that social policy can't fix.

Wayne C. Lusvardi
Pasadena, California

Brian C. Anderson has it right that capitalism is part of our moral problem but, like Francis Fukuyama, follows up a discouraging diagnosis of modern liberal democracy with an optimistic remedy for its potentially fatal diseases. There is no question that capitalists are simply making money producing what our citizens have been corrupted to demand. But, as Mr. Anderson admits near the end of his article, it is the most influential classes of "intellectuals" that have been the corrupters, not the capitalists per se. Both Anderson and Fukuyama virtually blame "the bourgeois culture" for getting us into this mess, but both overlook or downplay other forces at work. Anderson's best points are made in criticism of Fukuyama's determinism and inexplicable faith in mankind, but he displays the same weaknesses.

Liberal democracy has not always been in this situation; the collapse of sexual morals is relatively recent. Nor has it been helpless in the face of previous challenges, whether the existence of chattel slavery in the United States or the later rise of communism and Nazism in Europe. The regime of equality and liberty is not bereft of moral and political resources to face down evils and ultimately end them. Does Mr. Anderson believe it is pure accident that those evils are in our past rather than in our present? Indeed, what is the basis for supposing that the revival of the arts and literature, of faith and reason, even of statesmanship, is possible? How are these going to emerge in a "dying culture"?

Perhaps Mr. Anderson should consider drawing upon the moral and political wellsprings of modern liberal democracy itself. On the basis of the natural rights of all human beings, and through the terrors of a long and bloody war, Americans finally abolished slavery. The same commitment saw them through the great wars and crises of the twentieth century.

It will be no easy task to restore moral virtue, but if we have the courage that derives from knowledge of the right then a solution to our moral crisis is possible. It will not do, as Mr. Anderson apparently does, to neglect the moral principles—"the laws of nature and of nature's God," as the Declaration of Independence identifies them—of our American and Western tradition. No solution is going to pop out of a hat. It will arise, if it ever does, from our own sources of rectitude and prudence.

Richard H. Reeb, Jr.
Helendale, California

Brian C. Anderson replies:
Bob Hill commits the serious error of drawing a moral equivalence between the flawed liberal democracies of the West and the pervasive evil of communism in power. The West's moral universe wasn't—and isn't—solely materialistic and hostile to tradition and authority. The liberal universe is pluralistic, made up of traditional and antinomian tendencies both. Most critically, it is open to self-criticism and reform in a way that totalitarian regimes, by definition, are not.

Wayne C. Lusvardi is right to underscore that certain things—unborn children, for instance, or body parts, or drugs—shouldn't be subject to the logic of choice that prevails in a free market. He misunderstands me, however, if he thinks that I support postliberal policies only in the area of criminal justice.

As for Richard H. Reeb, Jr., nothing in my piece, which he seems not to have read carefully, suggests the impossibility of drawing on the best moral resources of the liberal democratic tradition—including the example of Abraham Lincoln, whose rhetoric he echoes, and the Declaration of Independence—to reform our culture. I do not hold that a "solution is going to pop out of a hat," as Mr. Reeb absurdly accuses me of thinking. But neither do I believe that intoning the Declaration is suf-

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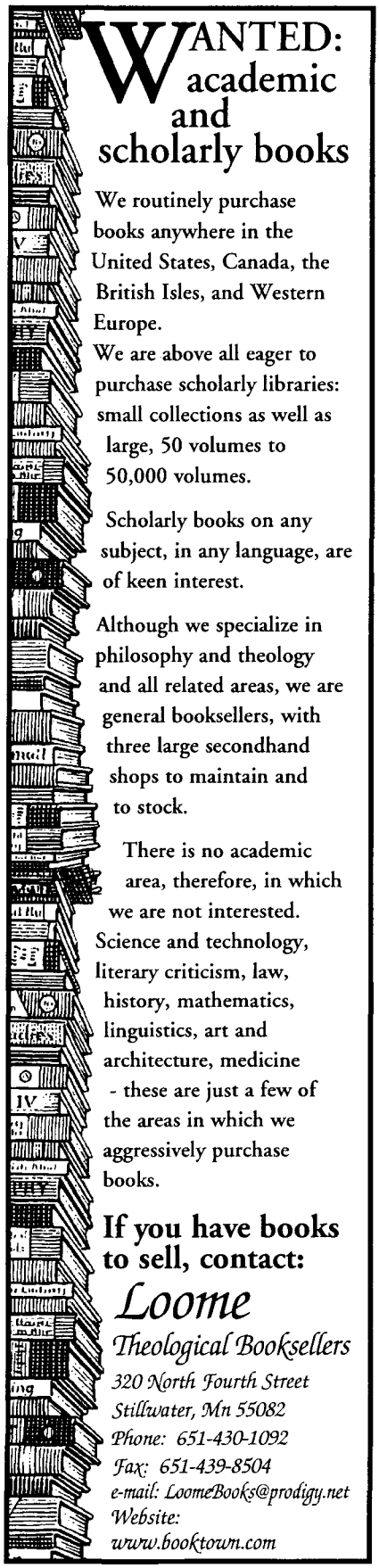
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ficient; such a project is oddly parochial and comes perilously close to ideological thinking, the affliction of the twentieth century.

Utopia Now!

As part of my research into the United Religions Initiative and its allies, I have been watching the development of the Earth Charter since 1995. Thomas Sieger Derr's essay about the Earth Charter ("Global Eco-Logic," February) shows that the text of the Earth Charter has become somewhat less radical in its recent revisions.

But while the text has become more moderate with time, the philosophy of the Charter sponsors remains revolutionary and totalitarian. The website of the Earth Charter Campaign features a document from Mikhail Gorbachev's Green Cross International titled "The Earth Charter: The Green Cross Philosophy." This document, written in 1996 and 1997 in Moscow and Geneva, does not mince words.

The rationale for the Charter is apocalyptic: "The prevailing development patterns in both the South and the North are leading the Planet to an economic, social, and environmental crisis which threatens the existence of human life and the integrity of Nature." In response, Green Cross calls for immediate radical change: "Current problems cannot be solved by piecemeal measures. . . . Radical change from the current trajectory is not an option, but an absolute necessity. Fundamental economic, social, and cultural changes that address the root causes of poverty and environmental degradation are required and they are required now."

Part of this revolution will entail "Stabilization of the World's Population." In 1997, Gorbachev told Green Cross that "for a certain transitional period families should limit themselves to one child"; once the world's population is stabilized, the former Communist premier would consider upping our ration to two children per family. The revolution will also require "Zero-Growth of Material Economy"; the needs of the world's poor will be met by "reducing material overconsumption by the rich minority."

To reach these goals, human rights and national sovereignty must move aside, and values must change: "The protection of the Biosphere, as the Common Interest of Humanity, must not be subservient to the rules of state sovereignty, demands of the free market, or individual rights. The idea of Global Sovereignty must be supported by a shift in values which recognizes this Common Interest."

Green Cross calls for "Global Sovereignty" with total power and universal jurisdiction. The "international body for the Sustainability of Human Life on the Earth" requires "the independence and power to facilitate agreement between all societal actors to support the protection of the Biosphere as the Common Interest of Humanity." Democratic institutions must not delay the Earth Charter revolution; at the 1995 State of the World Forum, Maurice Strong said, "We shouldn't wait until political democracy paves the way. We must act now."

Therefore, even though the recent drafts of the Earth Charter are less extreme than they once were, the philosophy of the Charter movement continues to be totalitarian.

Lee Penn
San Francisco, California

I have no quarrel with Thomas Sieger Derr's favoring of the United Nations' more sensible approach to environmental matters. People and bugs aren't on the same level of importance. However, Professor Derr posits a false alternative between anthropocentrism and pantheism. The late Francis Schaeffer argued that these were merely

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two manifestations of the same error: the placing of the perceived needs of a creature, rather than the will of the Creator God, at the center of one's worldview. The best approach, Schaeffer argued, was a biblically informed theocentric approach. Pantheism's error is obvious; anthropocentrism degenerates into utilitarianism by reducing God's creation to nothing more than a tool for satiating man's desires. Holy Scripture testifies that before humans appeared God repeatedly called the creation good; it seems that even a bug has intrinsic value.

Daniel Young
Ambler, Pennsylvania

Evidentialists and Presuppositionalists

In J. Budziszewski's review of Charles Colson and Nancy Pearcey's *How Now Shall We Live?*, he expresses surprise at Francis Schaeffer's inclusion as a primary inspiration. The surprise comes from Schaeffer's presuppositionalism, which means that after you reach the bedrock assumptions, there is nothing more to which you can appeal.

That is not strictly true about Schaeffer. Presuppositionalist he was, but there are two things he would point to further: the coherence of the presuppositions in matching the world outside of the person, and the fit between the presuppositions and the human life as the holder lives it. False presuppositions will always betray the one who holds them. A musician may say there is no law that music has to be beautiful, but his humanity will kick against his false belief. Schaeffer would tell that musician, pay attention to what your own humanity is saying, and you'll see your beliefs are false. Ordinary presuppositionalism does fall victim to Budziszewski's charge, but not Schaeffer's.

At the time when writers from Augustine to Aquinas to (even) C. S. Lewis were domesticated insiders speaking religio-speak to the choir, Schaeffer was saying, "Yes, you [postmodernists] have something there . . . lets see where it goes. Oops, it doesn't work. Ah, here's just the thing—."

Bruce C. Meyer
Arlington, Massachusetts

J. Budziszewski replies:
I thank Bruce C. Meyer for his correction concerning Francis Schaeffer. Since writing the review of the Colson and Pearcey book, my understanding of what Schaeffer was trying to do has been sharpened by reading a 1948 *Bible Today* article in which he argued that the controversy between evidentialism and presuppositionalism presents a false alternative. Presuppositionalists, he held, are right to assert that the ultimate premises of Christian and anti-Christian systems of thought are utterly at odds. On the other hand, evidentialists are right to assert that between Christian and anti-Christian systems of thought there is always a point of contact. The reason for this point of contact, he argued, is that nonbelievers cannot bring themselves to be completely consistent with their own presuppositions, and this inconsistency is a result of common grace. "Thus, illogically," he wrote, "men have in their accepted worldviews various amounts of that which is ours. But, illogical though it may be, it is there and we can appeal to it." Well put.

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Urban Complexities

I admire the overarching thesis of M. Francis Mannion's "The Church and the City" (February) that "Jesus' ministry of inaugurating the holy city of God within the conditions of the human city continues in the life of the Church, and stands at the very heart of what the Church must do in history"; that, furthermore, "that ministry, like all others, is symbolically condensed in the liturgy"; and that a renewed emphasis on the aesthetic implications of an orthodox Christian theology (in the most general sense) would be profoundly beneficial if it permeated our broader cultural discourse.

I believe, however, that the author's sound theological points are accompanied by a very narrow perspective regarding the history and meaning of the Western city along the way, and this undermines his thesis to the extent that it distorts the "centrality" of the Church to the city's evolving form.

Any examination of the development of urban form would reveal forces easily as influential as the Church's, and I would argue usually more so. Monsignor Mannion habitually draws on sources that employ the image of the city within the context of some particular systematic approach toward interpreting the world, wherein the city becomes a very static idea. Factors such as trade routes, the order of military encampment, property divisions, farming practices, building practices, economics and technology, and social stratification—not to mention a vast array of ritual processions and gatherings that might have only a tenuous connection to the type of conscious and coherent cosmology that Msgr. Mannion presupposes to have existed in these cultures—all coexisted with whichever form of religious devotion was particular to a given place and people.

I believe that the author's theology would be greatly enriched if the operative concept of the city therein embraced more of the "complexity and contradiction" inherent in great human endeavors; it might engender in it a sensibility that much of what is beauty is perplexing, and is meant to stay that way.

Andrew Mundroff
Arbutus, Maryland

Black Helicopters Reconsidered

Richard John Neuhaus' essay ("Forget the Bilderbergers," Public Square, February) on United Nations officials' interest in promoting transnational sovereignty and Non-Governmental Organizations' role in support of their effort was, as is everything he chooses to comment on, instructive.

But as I read what he had written, thoughts of our nation's Founders' work and public attitude during the last thirty years of the eighteenth century kept intruding. Much of the society for which they labored was not particularly well-educated or informed even by the standards of the day. Yet the Founders incorporated in the structure that became an exemplar for mankind their certainty that a republican government, contrived to be democratically receptive to the wishes of its citizens, could meet the nation's political and societal needs into the indefinite future.

In one sense, I suppose Father Neuhaus is simply deploring the lack of that breadth of vision among the leaders of the UN and the NGOs. But in another sense, he seems to share the UN/NGO leaders' elitism. "Forget," he says twice, "the Bilderbergers, the Masons, the Trilateral Commission, and the black helicopters."

Okay, I'll try, though I confess to not knowing what a "Bilderberger" is. I've had friends who distrusted the Trilateral Commission on broader grounds than Rockefeller involvement and currently claim at least one friend who fears black helicopters. While I'll not disown them, on the good Father's advice I'll parse what they say carefully.

But what is Fr. Neuhaus warning us of? Smalltime politicians of limited experience and one-note organizations, elitists who would rule us through creeping assumption of sovereignty, or right-wing nuts?

Seems to me that the right-wing nuts sensed the UN/NGO problem considerably before Fr. Neuhaus. Gun show habitués have muttered about black helicopters for years. Now, FIRST THINGS remarks on the underlying concern. Perhaps black helicopters connote John Birchers and militiamen in FIRST THINGS' circles, and we are urged to forget them to avoid the taint of associated guilt. But might not the perception of them as symbols of looming danger be an occasion for acknowledging right-wing prescience?

In short, should we forget those who accept black helicopters as symbols because they lack perception, or merely because they lack skill in articulating their fear?

T. A. Cramer
Eagle Rock, Virginia

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THIS TIME

Conservative Confusions

James Nuechterlein

John Stuart Mill famously labeled conservatism the stupid party. Whatever was the case then, that hardly holds today: modern conservatives, at least in America, are bursting with ideas. The problem is that they cannot agree among themselves just which ideas they should hold to. The conservatives' dilemma, as manifested most recently in the disputes surrounding Senator John McCain's unsuccessful campaign for the Republican presidential nomination, is not that their playbook is empty but that they can't get straight what page in it they should be reading from.

The McCain phenomenon, to be sure, was not primarily about ideas. The Senator's appeal had to do with his character rather than his program. Those who voted for him were all over the map ideologically, and there is little evidence that his flagship issue—campaign finance reform—matters very much to the public, especially among conservatives. McCain drew support because of who he is—a man of courage, independence, and astonishing heroism. Americans are understandably in awe of the fortitude with which he endured unspeakable conditions as a prisoner of war in Vietnam. And he's not simply a war hero. To an electorate chronically suspicious of politics, he comes across as the perfect antipolitician: unprogrammed, unpretentious, uncorrupt.

But if McCain's failed challenge to Governor George W. Bush had little to do with ideology, the dynamics of the struggle set off ideological tremors on both the left and the right. An editor at the *New Republic*, Franklin Foer, noting that a number of prominent Jewish neoconservatives had come out for McCain, suggested that the Senator's campaign signaled a reawakening of the neocon/theocon controversy on the right (a controversy Foer traces to FT's "The End of Democracy?" symposium in November 1996). Neocons, he argues, have grown increasingly uncomfortable in the marriage-of-convenience with Christian conservatives they entered into in the 1980s in order to defeat the left, and they welcomed (instigated?) McCain's attacks on Christian right leaders Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell as an opportunity to rid the GOP of political dead weight and themselves of an alliance gone sour.

Foer's analysis cannot entirely be dismissed, but it is off center on a number of points. Many of us identified with religious conservatism have never been in close alliance with Robertson or Falwell or with the organizations, the Christian Coalition and the Moral Majority, they respectively created. They're not our enemies, but neither politically nor theologically are we intimates. The "religious right" is not the undifferentiated entity Foer makes it out to be.

Neither, it seems, is neoconservatism. Shortly after Foer's article appeared, Norman Podhoretz, whom Foer had cited in support of his argument, published an essay in *National Review* on Jewish attitudes toward religious conservatives. Podhoretz's title, "The Christian Right and Its Demonizers: A Curious Fear and Loathing," telegraphed its thesis: that Jewish fear of Christian conservatives is wrongheaded, even paranoid, and that, all in all, the Christian right is good for the Jews and good for America. And Podhoretz is not alone: I know from personal experience that many Jewish neocons, however bemused they may be by styles of evangelical piety—a bemusement, I might add, shared by a number of non-evangelical Christians—still have no problem counting Christian conservatives as staunch cultural and political allies.

Still, whatever his errors and overgeneralizations, Foer is not completely off the mark. He based his analysis heavily on arguments that have appeared in the *Weekly Standard*, especially on a piece coauthored by William Kristol and David Brooks at the height of the McCain campaign, "The Politics of Creative Destruction." Kristol and Brooks, borrowing from the economist Joseph Schumpeter, adapt his summary of the paradoxical genius of capitalism to current political realities. Conservatism in general, and the GOP in particular, they say, is in need of creative destruction because of its current parlous condition. Conservatives have lost the political initiative to Bill Clinton's reconfigured centrist liberalism, and McCain's challenge to the Republican establishment offers the right the way to regain the political high ground.

In the first place, Kristol and Brooks argue, McCain would disenthrall the right of its excessively anti-government bias: "McCain doesn't say that government is oppressive and just needs to get out of the way. He says he wants to reform government to make us proud." Second, and more to the point of Foer's argument, McCain "would redirect a religiously based moral conservatism into a patriotically grounded moral appeal." "When McCain talks about

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remoralizing America," Kristol and Brooks go on, "he ends up talking about patriotism. . . . This conflation of religion and patriotism is very much in the tradition of Teddy Roosevelt and, for that matter, Ronald Reagan." The new religion of patriotism, Kristol and Brooks conclude, would, without antagonizing grassroots moral conservatives, appeal to independents leery of Robertson and Falwell's Christian zealotry and form "the heart of a new conservative governing majority."

The argument is an ingenious one. It is also, in my view, mischievous, misguided, and finally dangerous. Take, for starters, the curious linking of Roosevelt and Reagan, a linking as habitually indulged in by McCain as by Kristol and Brooks. Both TR and Reagan, it is true, were instinctive and passionate patriots. Both, too, were brilliant, even charismatic leaders—blessed, most of the time, with what a Roosevelt biographer called "a perfect sense of political pitch."

But that's about it for similarities. TR had an innocent faith in an activist federal government. As H. L. Mencken said, "He didn't believe in democracy; he believed simply in government." The New Nationalism he put forward in his quixotic Bull Moose campaign for the presidency in 1912, with its sweeping program of federal regulation of the economy and guarantees for social welfare, set the blueprint for the big government crusades of Progressivism, the New Deal, and the Great Society.

Reagan, of course, was just the opposite. Contra the *Weekly Standard* and its recurring, if vague, invocation of "national-greatness conservatism," he did believe that, foreign policy aside, government *should* "just get out of the way." His conception of national greatness rested on faith in the creative energies of the American people rather than in their government. His favorite Republican presidential predecessor, it should be remembered, was not TR but Calvin Coolidge. And even in foreign policy, his program was not the wholesale interventionism that TR sometimes inclined to and that the *Weekly Standard* appears to favor.

But it is Kristol and Brooks' "conflation of religion and patriotism" that is most troubling. Reagan, it must be conceded, flirted with it in his biblically informed vision of America as a "city on a hill" providentially established by God as example to the nations. The Puritans liked to invoke that image, but they meant it more in theological than political terms. Reagan, so far as I can tell, simply meant it to convey the idea that the American experiment, however conceived, was a very good thing indeed.

TR, at his worst, did make a religion of patriotism, and it provided the ugliest chapter in his career. His ferocious jingoism during World War I—"He who is not with us, absolutely and without reserve of any kind, is against us, and should be treated as an alien enemy"—stands as an embarrassment for all of us who revere his memory and admire his undoubted, if flawed, greatness. The very concept of a religion of patriotism is an invitation to idolatry. America is properly loved only by those who keep their loves in proper order, who love their nation only in subordination to their transcendent loves.

Let me be clear. I do not for a moment suspect, much less accuse, my friends and allies at the *Weekly Standard* of political idolatry. My sense is that they let themselves get momentarily carried away in their enthusiasm for their candidate and their cause. None of us is immune to the temptation of rhetorical excess: we all, at one time or another, say more or other than what we precisely mean. But a religion of patriotism is a notion that ought be avoided not simply because it is capable of misunderstanding or misinterpretation, but because it is wrong, period.

And now is not the time on the right for "creative destruction." At this moment, the Republican party, and the conservative cause with it, has a better than even chance of claiming an across the board supremacy in next November's election. Those who welcome such a prospect should consider: George W. Bush is closer to Ronald Reagan than he is to Theodore Roosevelt. And while TR—the man who practiced creative destruction on the GOP in 1912—was a great man, he was not, in the end, nearly so successful a politician as Reagan. FT

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Opinion

Following the Lamb

Kenneth D. Whitehead

In its broad outlines, the story of the sixteen Carmelite nuns martyred at Compiègne during the French Revolution is quite well known. Gertrud von Le Fort based her novel *The Song at the Scaffold* on the event, and the great French Catholic novelist Georges Bernanos took it up again with great power and spiritual insight in his final work, *Dialogues of the Carmelites.* The *Dialogues* were later adapted in the equally powerful modern opera of the same name by Francis Poulenc that has dazzled audiences since it was first produced in 1957.

But in a recent book—*To Quell the Terror: The Mystery of the Vocation of the Sixteen Carmelites of Compiègne Guillotined July 17, 1794* (Institute of Carmelite Studies, 244 pp., $11.95 paper)—William Bush takes us even deeper into this compelling story. Not only does he provide the first English-language narrative of the actual events, he shows how the nuns' dramatic martyrdom, like all true Christian martyrdoms, constituted a conscious, willing offering of their lives in response to a divine call to help "fill up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of his body, the Church" (Colossians 1:24).

Professor Bush originally became engaged with this story through his literary work devoted to the writings of Georges Bernanos. An emeritus professor of French literature at the University of Western Ontario, he is one of the foremost Bernanos scholars writing in English today. In editing the original manuscripts of the *Dialogues of the Carmelites* in the early 1980s, Bush became caught up with the actual history of the original Carmelite martyrs. He found that their real history differed in important ways from the dramatized versions of it. Nearly two decades of careful research, sometimes conducted with the help of various Carmelite houses, have now resulted in this book, which henceforth has to be considered the definitive account of these famous victims of the French revolutionary Terror.

Bush establishes in fascinating detail that these sixteen religious sisters were no casual, accidental martyrs. Quite the contrary: in the atmosphere of the French Revolution, they found themselves consciously offering themselves "to quell the Terror," as the book's title proclaims. It began when an earlier member of their Carmelite religious house had a mystical, prophetic dream "to follow the Lamb." On the basis of that dream, the prioress and mother superior of these sixteen, Madame Lidoine ("Mother Teresa of St. Augustine"), had led the community in adopting an act of consecration that they renewed daily as a community during the Terror, and by which they specifically offered themselves up in response to it and to the atrocities of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

The unjust arrest of these innocent sisters, their condemnation by the kangaroo court headed by the notorious Fouquier-Tinville, and their execution on the guillotine thus constituted a true martyrdom in the classic Christian sense. These nuns even improvised a hymn which they sang to the tune of the *Marseillaise,* according to which the day of their execution was to be their own *jour de gloire,* "day of glory." Before mounting the scaffold, each sister kissed a small terracotta statuette of the Madonna and Child held by the prioress; then each asked her, their legitimate religious superior:

"Permission to die, mother?"

"Go, my daughter."

Each sister then mounted the scaffold in turn. The first to go, the young Sister Constance, began to intone Psalm 117, *Laudate Dominum omnes gentes,* "Praise the Lord, all you peoples!" The others took up the chant, "singing at the scaffold" in truth. The psalm goes on to affirm that, in the translation used by the author, "His mercy is confirmed upon us," thus placing the martyrdom of these sisters in the context of God's mercy.

All the historical sources testify to the unusual silence that prevailed in the crowds during the sisters' journey to the guillotine and their execution. It was usually the case that the crowds mocked and jeered the victims of the Terror, but this execution was very different. One of the remarkable facts Prof. Bush uncovers is that these nuns went to their deaths wearing their religious habits—even though the revolutionary government had long since strictly prohibited them by law. This martyrdom was, the author makes clear, a moment of grace; contemplating it, we cannot fail to understand why "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church."

As things turned out, Maximilien Robespierre fell from power just one week after the execution of the Carmelites, and the Terror itself then came to an end. Some have believed, then and since, that it was the willing self-sacrifice of these sixteen nuns that helped

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to bring about the cessation of the Terror.

In few narratives of the French Revolution will readers find the vivid and sometimes wrenching detail (as in the description of how the guillotine actually functioned) that is in this book. Yet the effect, far from being depressing or morbid, is moving and even exalting. And rarely do the raw facts of history find themselves as well explained and illuminated by religious and theological truth—the "mystery of vocation," for example—as they do in this telling. It is notable that the author is a member of the Orthodox Church. And it is perhaps not too much to hope that his tribute to the heroic sanctity of these Carmelites, who were beatified in 1906, will help advance the cause of their canonization.

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Home Alone in the Universe

Guillermo Gonzalez & Hugh Ross

Ptolemy (second century) was the first and boldest in a long succession of spin doctors for the primacy of human beings. The whole universe, he postulated, rotated around us, with the Earth sitting at the center of Heaven itself. Any marketing consultant will tell you that positioning is everything, and center-of-the-universe is hard to beat. A Polish astronomer named Copernicus (1473-1543) rudely pointed out: Sorry Earthlings, we spin around the Sun, not vice versa. . . . Giordano Bruno, a sort of sixteenth-century Carl Sagan, popularized these concepts, . . . saying, among other things, that "innumerable suns exist. Innumerable earths revolve around those suns. Living beings inhabit these worlds." . . . Bruno's crime, like Galileo's, was to undermine the uniqueness of our planet, and by doing so, to threaten the intellectual security of the religious dictatorships of his time. . . . Over time, advances in astronomy have relentlessly reinforced the utter insignificance of Earth on a celestial scale.

So wrote Nathan Myhrvold in an article titled "Mars to Humanity: Get Over Yourself" in *Slate* (and excerpted in *Time*) one week after NASA's announcement in August 1996 of possible evidence of life in a Martian meteorite. Myhrvold's story of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century astronomy is part of the common positivist telling of history that, to its adherents, marks the victory of science over religious superstition. Positivists begin with Nicolaus Copernicus, Bruno, and Galileo, who removed man from the center of the universe, and follow with later scientific discoveries that have pushed us into ever more remote regions of the universe. This idea of our "mediocrity" has come to be known as the Copernican Principle (CP, for short). It enjoys wide public acceptance and has dominated higher education for several decades—many introductory astronomy texts still recount the CP within the positivist model.

Over the last four centuries the CP has evolved from a simple claim that the Earth is not located at the center of the solar system to an expansive philosophical doctrine that the Earth, and particularly its inhabitants, are not special in any significant way. This principle is sometimes seen in opposition to the Judeo-Christian belief that the fate of humans is central to God's creation. Why being at the edge of the universe is supposed to be so devastating is never fully explained: after all, even among those in the medieval church who adopted the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic geocentric model, man was not "the very center of creation." As Thomas Kuhn describes the fourteenth-century Christian cosmology in *The Copernican Revolution*, "Man's location, too, is intermediate: the Earth's surface is close to its debased and corporeal center but within sight of the celestial periphery which surrounds it symmetrically. Man lives in squalor and uncertainty, and he is very close to Hell." Most of the Church's attachment to the Aristotelian/Ptolemaic model was a result not of arrogance or narcissism, but of the incorporation into Christian theology of Aristotelian physics. If anyone should be blamed for placing the Earth at the center of the universe, it is Aristotle, not the Church.

It is useful to distinguish between two versions of the CP: the simple physical claim of the non-centrality of the Earth and the non-uniqueness of the substances of which it is composed, and the more general philosophical extrapolation to the claim that the Earth and its inhabitants are not special in any significant way. While CP advocates can rightly point to the astronomical discoveries in support of the physical thesis, they have been frequently disappointed in their quest to verify the more expansive philosophy. For example, CP advocates have often described the other bodies in the solar system as only slight variants of the Earth, believing that life and even advanced civilizations existed on other planets, the Moon, and even the Sun. Just a few decades ago some astronomers were still

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speculating about the possibility of advanced life on Venus and Mars, which the Venera and Viking missions respectively have revealed to be lifeless.

Two recent events show the contemporary influence of the CP philosophy. The first was the claim by NASA scientists that they had discovered the remains of ancient Martian life in the meteorite ALH84001. This event inspired Mr. Myhrvold to offer his grand pronouncements about the ubiquity of life in the universe (both simple and advanced) and the demise of Christianity. As of this writing, the case for ancient remains of life in ALH84001 is very weak. Even if life's remains are found on Mars, as one day they probably will, this will not prove life is widespread in the universe. It would also have to be shown that life arose there independently rather than by contamination from Earth. The true lesson taught to us by ALH84001 and the multiple probes sent there since the 1960s is that Mars, possessing the most Earth-like climate of any other planet in our solar system, is apparently not presently capable of supporting life, even with the help of Earth's microbes early on. What at first seemed like a major success for the broad version of CP has instead turned out to be a major blow against it.

The second event was the discovery of the first (giant) planet orbiting another solar-like star in October 1995. Since then, over two-dozen additional giant planet candidates have been announced. They have been accompanied by nearly half as many popular science books on the subject, almost all telling basically the same story—the newly discovered planets prove the solar system is not special, greatly improving the probability that extraterrestrial intelligence (ETI) exists. The great majority of these works cite the CP favorably in their introductory chapters.

But again, the philosophical CP is undermined rather than supported by these new findings. Although the discovery of these new planetary systems does show that the Sun is not the only star with orbiting planets, it turns out that those planets have very different characteristics than those in our solar system. Most of the new planets have highly eccentric orbits. Further, they have orbital periods as short as three days, while the shortest orbit in our system is Mercury's eighty-eight days. And we have yet to find among the several stars considered to be "twins" of our own any with giant planets whose masses and orbits are at all close to that of Jupiter. All this implies that the solar system is *not* typical, a conclusion obvious to anyone who does not already assume the CP.

There are other examples from astronomy that demonstrate our special place in the universe. The solar system occupies a position in the disk of the Milky Way approximately halfway to its edge and in-between two spiral arms. We now know enough about the structure of our galaxy to understand why our location should be preferred over others. If our solar system were closer to the center of the Milky Way or closer to one of its spiral arms, we would encounter harmful radiation from supernovae and perturbations from stars that would send Oort cloud comets careening into the inner solar system. If the solar system had formed farther out in the disk of the Milky Way, there would not have been sufficient heavy elements to build a planet capable of supporting life. While most textbooks discuss the Sun as if it were a typical star, it is a more massive star than 90 percent of the stars in the Milky Way. The Sun is anomalous in other ways, including its composition, brightness variation, and Galactic orbit. It can be plausibly argued that each of these characteristics must be exactly as it is for advanced life to exist on Earth.

The general recognition that the universe appears to be finely tuned for humans is described by one of several forms of the Anthropic Principle (AP). The AP has been acknowledged for about a quarter of a century, but it was not until John Barrow and Frank Tipler published their massive technical work *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* in 1986 that it was widely discussed. The Weak Anthropic Principle (WAP) is the most basic version—the simple recognition that the parameters we observe in our environment must not be incompatible with our existence. It is difficult to quarrel with the simple physical interpretation of the WAP: it is just a type of observer selection bias. We should not be surprised to observe, for example, that we are living on a planet with an oxygen-rich atmosphere, for the simple reason that we require oxygen to live. The WAP "explains" why we should not observe ourselves to be living on, say, Titan, but it fails to account for the origin of the oxygen in our atmosphere and hence for the rarity of planets with oxygen-rich atmospheres. However, Barrow and Tipler, no doubt motivated by the philosophical CP, have burdened the basic physical interpretation of the WAP with unwarranted philosophical extrapolations. In considering the WAP with regard to the observable universe, they claim that we ought not be surprised at measuring a universe so finely tuned for life, for if it were different, we would not observe it.

But as Richard Swinburne first explained and as William Lane Craig and John Leslie later argued, we should indeed be surprised at observing features of the universe that are highly improbable and are necessary for our existence. The strength of the argument against the CP—and in favor of design—is in the simultaneous fine-tuning of many aspects of the universe, from the atomic and cosmological constants to biochemistry.

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Claiming that the universe is not special because it is one of an infinite set of universes, each with its own unique set of physical constants, is perhaps the grandest extrapolation of the philosophical CP. The so-called Many Worlds or World Ensemble hypotheses are invoked to try to explain away the "disturbing cosmic coincidence problems," as cosmologists often phrase the issue in their technical papers. These proposals, apart from their scientific problems, can be criticized on philosophical grounds. An actual infinite set leads to logical inconsistencies, and there is no reason to think that an infinite set of universes should have a completely random distribution in their properties. World Ensemble advocates are obviously driven by the desire to avoid the "God-hypothesis," and, in adopting such extravagant and unnecessary assumptions, they are effectively conceding that the WAP has been impotent in discrediting the teleological interpretation.

By insisting that the apparent fine-tuning of our solar system's parameters is just due to chance, rather than pointing towards a greater truth, astronomers have missed out on many discoveries. Their reluctance to admit explanations other than chance has limited our understanding of the Earth's habitability. There is, in sum, a great deal about Planet Earth and its inhabitants that is anything but "mediocre." It is not scientific reason or evidence that stands in the way of exploring the finely tuned conditions that make possible our place in the cosmos but a dogmatic commitment to the philosophical CP—a commitment apparently motivated by fear of what we might discover.

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The Constitution in the Cave

Steven D. Smith

There's an old and famous story about a community of people who live in a cave. Fires burn behind them, throwing shadows of various shapes onto the cave wall; and never having seen real objects in the sunlight, the cave people think these shadows are the only and most complete reality. One day, though, one of the cave dwellers happens to find a passageway to the outside world. He heroically struggles up the passageway and emerges into the world. At first the sunlight blinds his eyes, but after his vision adapts he sees, for the first time, a world far more real and rich than any he and his community ever imagined. Out of a sense of duty, the enlightened one then returns to the cave, hoping to guide his fellows to a similar illumination.

The storyteller suggests that if it were wise, the cave community would submit to the governance of this enlightened person, since he alone understands the higher truths and more complete realities. The political program associated with this story is often described as one of rule by "philosopher-kings," or Platonic guardians.

In a political community devoted to democracy, or government "of the people, by the people, and for the people," the rule of philosopher-kings is bound to offend. The objection is captured in one of Learned Hand's most famous statements: "For myself it would be most irksome to be ruled by a bevy of Platonic guardians, even if I knew how to choose them, which I assuredly do not." In this democratic climate of opinion it's not surprising that critics of a particular legal regime, such as the regime of modern constitutional law enforced by judicial review, will often accuse the regime of being in effect a sort of Platonic guardianship, and defenders of the regime will typically and emphatically deny the charge.

At first glance, the proposition that constitutional law is the dogma of an educated elite seems calculated to be provocative. But on reflection it may seem that the question is not really controversial after all. When I mention this proposition to people of different jurisprudential leanings, their reactions are usually similar: "So what's to argue about?"

So what makes this idea so intuitively controversial? Consider the issue as a proposition for debate. *Resolved: that constitutional law is the dogma of an educated elite.* The case *for* the proposition is obvious enough, I suppose; speakers for the affirmative will emphasize decisions out of touch with popular sentiments, like those protecting the speech rights of Communists, the abortion decisions, the flag desecration cases, the school prayer decisions, and so forth. But how should the case for the negative be crafted? One can imagine three possible negative cases, which we might call the flat denial position, the "interpretation" position, and the "constitutional-law-as-reason" position.

Perhaps the most straightforward negative case would simply deny the proposition outright—by asserting that the content of modern constitutional doctrines and decisions is no closer to the views and

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values of more educated classes of citizens than to those of citizens generally. Although I have made no empirical test of this contention, it seems on the whole not very plausible.

Take, for example, the area of law I focus on—the religion clause of the First Amendment. It has long been settled law that teacher-led prayers in the public schools are unconstitutional, and I cannot recall hearing any law professor (or anyone else in an academic setting) dissent from that basic proposition. Yet for decades surveys have consistently shown that sizable majorities of citizens favor school prayer. So it seems pretty clear whose dogma is reflected, and whose is rejected, in constitutional law.

A second argument might deny that constitutional law is the dogma of an educated elite by insisting that judges are merely *interpreting* the Constitution. We needn't spend much time on this claim, though, because the people who will defend modern constitutional law as an "interpretation" of the Constitution will also—typically and, I think, necessarily—advocate a creative kind of interpretation in which the interpreter's perspectives and values figure directly and prominently in the process and the results of interpretation.

In Ronald Dworkin's well-known account, for example, constitutional interpretation must satisfy two requirements: fit and justification. The interpreter cannot do or say just anything he likes; his interpretation must achieve an adequate fit with the legal materials, such as text and precedent. But once that threshold has been passed—and especially with quite amorphous provisions like the Fourteenth Amendment the fit requirement is not very stringent—the interpreter may and indeed must make the provision "the best it can be" by choosing the construction most in accordance with sound political and moral philosophy. In this way, the interpreter's own substantive views enter directly to determine the result.

To be sure, the interpreter *can* still deny that in creatively interpreting the Constitution he is imposing his own political preferences, or perhaps his own values, on the law. The proponent of creative interpretation maintains that there is a vast difference between promoting one's own political agenda and following the dictates of the best available moral and political philosophy. The former is an activity of pure self-interest; the latter is dedicated to pursuing and then following something called "reason."

This observation leads us to the third negative position: the claim that the Constitution, or constitutional discourse, is a way of letting human affairs be governed by reason rather than by mere force or fortuity. This claim might cause us to see the proposition at issue in a new light. It may be true that the substance of constitutional law correlates with the views and values of the educated classes, but that correlation might merely reflect the fact that educated citizens are on the whole more prepared, or perhaps more willing, to understand and respect the teachings of reason in the realm of politics. So in this view, even though constitutional law *does* coincide with or in a sense reflect the views and values of an educated elite, it would be as misleading to accuse the constitutional regime of being "elitist" as it would be to make the same charge against a university if in its science classes it emphasized the views of the best astronomers with the best telescopes over popular folklore about the stars.

This depiction of constitutional law as the expression of reason provides a connection between modern constitutional law (and constitutional law scholarship) and the constitutional project initiated two centuries ago. The framers self-consciously understood their project as one of freeing human affairs from the tyranny of force and chance and bringing them under the governance of reason. Modern constitutional discourse is in an important sense a continuation of that project.

In another important sense, though, modern constitutional thinking departs radically from the project as understood in the founding era. As described by historians like Henry May and Daniel Boorstin, the Enlightenment world in which the Founders worked understood nature not as a collection of particles in aimless motion, but rather as a kind of providential scheme or design in which human beings had a preassigned part. The Founders' view of politics was tied directly to their understanding of nature. As May points out, "A benign God, a purposeful universe, and a universal moral sense are necessary at all points to Jefferson's political system." More generally, for the founding generation an essential part of politics was to protect natural rights, and the very existence and meaning of rights was bound up in founding-era commitments to "nature and nature's God."

In this view of things, the function of reason was to discern the shape of the providential design in which ethics and politics were grounded. And the claim of reason to a role in governance was much the same as it had been in Plato's thinking: reason was the human faculty that allowed us to perceive truths and realities that transcend merely human constructions.

Today, no doubt, many people still hold some version of this view. That is, they may still believe there is some kind of providential design in nature. But if there is any class that does *not* hold this worldview, it is the educated elite—at least when it is behaving *as* an educated elite. John Searle describes the modern worldview as containing two propositions that are beyond serious doubt: first, that everything that exists

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is composed of and reducible to atomic particles in motion, and second, that higher life forms are the product of unguided Darwinian evolution. With reference to older, more theistic, beliefs, Searle suggests that today "in our deepest reflections we cannot take such opinions seriously."

Searle's description tells us a lot about the climate of opinion that prevails in academic contexts. Although constitutional scholars and judges rarely pay attention to this change in worldviews, the change complicates—and, I believe, seriously threatens—the familiar claim that constitutional law or discourse is somehow a way for reason to direct the governance of human affairs. Let me notice, very quickly, just two aspects of this problem.

First, if reason is no longer a faculty enabling us to discern some cosmic design, then it is no longer clear what claim reason has upon us, or upon our politics. On the contrary, the sorts of habits that we associate with "reasoning"—that is, reflecting and discussing and trying to achieve some kind of coherence among our various opinions—can come to seem like nothing more than the mental preferences (or prejudices) of a particular class of people—the dogmatic proceduralism of an educated elite.

Take what is probably the most fundamental commitment of reason—the commitment to intellectual consistency, or noncontradiction. Aristotle's classic treatment derives the principle of noncontradiction from an assumption about the nature of reality—that "it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be at the same time." On that assumption, contradictions in ethical and political thought are unacceptable because if two propositions are contradictory, then at least one of them must misrepresent the reality that they seek to describe.

Eliminate the assumption that ethical thought is about objective reality, though, and the aversion to contradiction loses much of its warrant. If someone sincerely reports that he believes abortion is wrong but capital punishment is right, then that is just how he feels, and there is nothing more to examine. Perhaps we *could* try to inquire into the consistency or inconsistency of these views; but the inquiry would be as pointless as asking whether someone who likes "sweet and sour pork" has an incoherent taste because "sweet" and "sour" are contradictory qualities.

In short, within this worldview, Walt Whitman had it right when he said (on behalf of the people): "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself." And if some scholar finds this position offensive on logical grounds, or if he insists on trying to see his own beliefs (or the law in general) as a single coherent whole, we can only regard this poor soul as indulging a peculiar personal taste or prejudice.

A second problem (or at least interesting feature) generated by the change in worldviews is that in one sense the educated elite now serves a function just opposite to the one it served in the classical view. Back then, reason (and the classes of people trained to exercise reason) served to lead the people in accordance with a higher truth or reality of which the people in general were not fully aware. Now, on the contrary, it is more likely the people in general who retain some kind of belief in a higher truth and reality; and it is the educated elite who, as Searle said, cannot in their deepest reflections take that possibility seriously.

The function of reason now, as understood by many contemporary constitutional scholars or political philosophers, is not to direct human affairs in accordance with a vision of transcendent truth, but to prevent such a vision from entering into political decision-making. Reason does not infuse higher truths into public deliberations, but rather insulates those deliberations from the influence of residual belief in those truths.

So it seems we should end with a revised version of the classic story. In the contemporary rendition, there is a group of people who live in a cave and who mostly see only shadows passing on the walls. But many of these people also believe in a myth about an outside world in which the light is more pure and bright, and objects are more solid and real than the shadows in the cave. And their acceptance of this myth, it seems, affects the way these people live in a variety of ways; some of them go so far as to treat the myth as somehow regulative with respect to public policies and decisions.

A small group of more educated cave dwellers comes to understand, though (or at least it thinks it does), that this myth is mere wishful thinking, and that the cave is all there is. This group then sets about to develop a discourse for making group decisions in which all vestiges of the myth are eliminated, so that public affairs can be conducted in accordance with what the educated elite is pleased to call "public reason."

In sum, modern constitutional law and theory in effect manage to revive Plato's story while in a sense standing the story on its head. That peculiar achievement is our contemporary contribution, for what it's worth, to the age-old controversy of the cave.

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The Return of Political Philosophy

Pierre Manent

It could be said that the twentieth century has witnessed the disappearance, or withering away, of political philosophy. An old-fashioned empirical proof of this statement is easy to produce: certainly no Hegel, no Marx, even no Comte, has lived in our century, able to convey to the few and the many alike a powerful vision of our social and political statics and dynamics.

However highly we might think of the philosophical capacities and results of Heidegger, Bergson, Whitehead, or Wittgenstein, we would not single out any of them for his contribution to *political* philosophy. Heidegger, it is true, ventured into some political action, including speeches, but it is a matter for deep regret. Heidegger's was the steepest fall; on a much lower level, there was Sartre's indefatigable vituperation against anything rational or decent in civic life.

It is true that contrariwise, authors like Sir Karl Popper and Raymond Aron have been worthy contributors to both general epistemology and political inquiry, always in a spirit of sturdy and humane citizenship. And some modern representatives of that venerable tradition of thought, Thomism, have offered serious reflection on moral, social, and political problems within a comprehensive account of the world. But despite such countervailing considerations, the general diagnosis seems to me to be inescapable: no modern original philosopher has been willing or able to include a thorough analysis of political life within his account of the human world, or, conversely, to elaborate his account of the whole from an analysis of our political circumstances.

To be sure, the effort to understand social and political life did not cease in this century. It even underwent a huge expansion through the extraordinary development of the social sciences, which have increasingly determined the self-understanding of modern men and women. It might be asserted that the collective and multifaceted work of all those sociologists, anthropologists, psychologists, economists, and political scientists has shed more light on our common life than could the exertions of any individual mind, however gifted; that, when it comes to understanding our social and political life, this "collective thought" is necessarily more impartial than even a mind as impartial as Hegel's; that in this sense political philosophy, including democratic political philosophy, has an undemocratic character since it cannot be so collectivized; and that accordingly its withering away is a natural accompaniment to the consolidation and extension of democracy.

As is the case with all collective enterprises, the social sciences have many more practitioners than they do ideas and principles. I would even argue that they rest upon one sole principle, the separation of facts and values, which sets them apart from philosophy and testifies to their scientific character. The demise of political philosophy is of a piece with the triumph of this principle. I admit that generally such sweeping statements are better avoided. Nevertheless it is a fact that the fact/value distinction has become not only the presupposition of present-day social science but also the prevalent opinion in society at large. In present conditions, a teenager proves his or her coming of age, a citizen proves his or her competence and loyalty, by making use of this principle. Nowhere has the principle been set forth with more power and brilliance than in the work of Max Weber. The limit-

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less and tormented landscape of twentieth-century social and political thought is commanded by Weber's towering presence and overwhelming influence.

Speaking before students just after the end of World War I, Weber asks about his duty as a teacher, about what his audience, and the public at large, can legitimately require of him. He answers, in reflections later published as *Science as a Vocation*, that they have a claim on his *intellectual probity*: the teacher, as a scientist, has the obligation to acknowledge that to establish the intrinsic structures of cultural values and to evaluate those values constitute two totally distinct tasks. Weber rigorously distinguishes between *science*, which ascertains facts and relations between facts, and *life*, which necessarily involves evaluation and action.

This proposition has become commonplace today, yet it is difficult to understand what exactly it means. To give an example that is more than an example, how does one describe what goes on in a concentration camp without evaluating it? As some commentators have pointed out, Weber, in his historical and sociological studies, does not tire of evaluating even when establishing the facts; no, he ceaselessly evaluates so as to be able to establish the facts. Otherwise how could he tell a "prophet" from a "charlatan"?

However that may be, it is clear that for Weber, intellectual honesty necessarily prevents us from believing or teaching that science can show us how we ought to live; and that this same intellectual probity necessarily prevents us from believing, for instance, that a thing is good because it is beautiful, or the other way around. But what are the causes of his peculiar preoccupation with intellectual probity? In Weber's opinion, modern science exposes it to a specific danger.

Modern science exhibits a singular trait: it is necessarily unfinished—it can never be completed. It is open-ended, since there is always more to be known. Weber asks why human beings devote themselves to an activity that can never be completed, why they ceaselessly try to know what they know they will never completely know. The meaning of modern science is to be meaningless. Thus intellectual honesty requires that we not confer an arbitrary meaning on science, that we be faithful to its meaninglessness by fearlessly carrying on its enterprise. This necessary virtue is at the same time inhuman, or superhuman; indeed it is heroic. Since heroism, however necessary, is rare, many so-called scholars or teachers succumb to the temptation to confer arbitrarily some human meaning on science, or its provisional results. Weber believed that the scientist who thus lapses from his duty transforms himself into a petty demagogue or a petty prophet.

What characterizes the modern situation is that only science can be the object of public affirmation or approbation. Other "values"—for instance, esthetic or religious "values"—cannot be publicly expressed with enough sincerity to hold their own in the public square. At the end of *Science as a Vocation*, we read:

> The fate of an epoch characterized by rationalization, intellectualization, most of all by the disenchantment of the world, led human beings to expel the most sublime and supreme values from public life. They found refuge either in the transcendent realm of mystical life or in the fraternity of direct and reciprocal relationships among isolated individuals. There is nothing fortuitous in the fact that the most eminent art of our time is intimate, not monumental, nor in the fact that nowadays it is only in small communities, in face-to-face contacts, in pianissimo, that we are able to recover something that might resemble the prophetic pneuma that formerly set whole communities ablaze and welded them together. . . . For those who are unable to bear this present fate with manliness, there is only this piece of advice: go back silently—without giving to your gesture the publicity dear to renegades, but simply and without ceremony—to the old churches who keep their arms widely open.

This eloquent conclusion bears, and needs, rereading today. There is nothing antiquated or quaint about it. On the contrary, the stripping down of the public square and the flight into private realms have continued apace, coupled with the ever growing power of science to mold every aspect of our lives, including the most intimate. As a consequence, public life is more and more exclusively filled with private lives: what remains of "the public" is nothing but the publicization of "the private"—or so it seems.

Of course, this assessment could be said to miss the fundamental fact of modern society which, under the appearance of meaninglessness, is the coming-into-being of the noblest principles of all, democracy and self-determination. There is no doubt that Weber, however friendly to its political institutions, underestimates the strength and resilience of democracy, perhaps its human meaning and range. In his eyes democracy is no match—no remedy—for the disenchantment of the world, and for a good reason: it results from it. It is unable to reunify modern human beings since it ratifies and, so to speak, institutionalizes their intimate divisions.

If we take seriously *Science as a Vocation*, we will say that there is a gaping hole, a void, a meaninglessness at the heart of modern life since science, the highest and sole truly public activity, is meaningless. At the

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same time, if modern man wants to be equal to the task of science, he ought to look this nothingness in the face without blinking. In this sense, nihilism, at least this nihilism, is not only our curse but also our duty. Weber's eloquence aimed at keeping us awake and forcing our gaze toward this central nothingness. Thus the most authoritative, nay, the only authoritative voice in the realm of social and political thought in this century was a desperate voice.

It is impossible to put Max Weber behind us. Because he looms so large, it is difficult for us to see how the human phenomenon appeared before he separated science and life. But let us be alert enough to realize how strange and lopsided our intellectual and moral life currently is. Each and every human thing is fair game for science. Through separating facts from values we are able to divert the mighty flow of reality into the bottles of science.

But there is no reciprocity: science is never allowed to come back to illuminate reality and life. Democracy is predicated on the basic intelligence of the common man, which in turn is predicated on the inherent intelligibility of life, at least of the current occurrences of life. As a result, democracy is the regime that has the least tolerance for nihilism. (And nihilism breeds contempt for democracy.) To say that life is intelligible is not to say that it is unproblematic or without mystery. It is only to say that what we do is naturally accompanied by what we think and say, or that we ordinarily give some account of what we do. Our actions are many, and our accounts often conflicting, and so we reflect and deliberate and debate. The life of the mind is inherently dialectical—although, through the separation of facts and values, we have often lost sight of that reality.

Weber well understood that the separation between life and science was in some sense unbearable for ordinary mankind, and he rightly noticed that the attendant discomfort gave rise to fake monumentalism, spurious prophesying, and pedantic fanaticism. Certainly Europe would soon experience all those ugly phenomena on a scale that the desperate Weber had not anticipated even in his most desperate mood. Very roughly, we could say that totalitarianism was the attempt to fuse together science and life. In communism, the fusion was forced through the despotism of "science"—understood vulgarly. In Nazism, the fusion came through the despotism of "life"—again, understood in an utterly vulgar way.

Totalitarianism was the *experimentum crucis* for political philosophy in our century. Through it political philosophy was radically tested, and was found wanting. The mere fact that such terrible enterprises could arise was proof that European thinkers had not developed and spread a rational and humane understanding of modern political circumstances. This claim does not presuppose the proposition, abstract to the point of meaninglessness, that "ideas govern the world"—only the sound observation that human beings are thinking animals who need tolerably accurate ideas and evaluations to orient themselves in the world. This truism is the truer the more intellectually active and able the person concerned. It would be unfair to extend culpability for this century's crimes into the past indefinitely, but it is true that, after Hegel elaborated his synthesis, no other philosopher was able to give a satisfactory, that is, an impartial, account of the modern State and society. Political philosophy after Hegel was not able to give a nearly satisfactory account of totalitarianism during and even *after* the fact.

Michael Oakeshott once remarked that great political philosophies are generally answers to specific political predicaments. It is easy to document this proposition from Plato and Aristotle, through Machiavelli and Hobbes, to Rousseau and Hegel. As I observed at the outset, the twentieth century did not elicit such comprehensive answers from political reflection, and this despite the fact that its predicament was of the most extreme sort: devastating world wars, murderous revolutions, beastly tyrannies. If there ever was a time for writing a new *Leviathan*, that was it.

But our most impressive documents are novels: which political treatise on communism is a match for *1984* or *Animal Farm* or *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* or *The Yawning Heights*? And what a strange commentary on this situation that, for some readers at least, the most suggestive introduction to Nazi tyranny is to be found in *On the Marmor Cliffs* (1939), a fable whose author, Ernst Jünger, was a soldier and adventurer with more than a passing complicity with the nihilistic mood that fomented Hitler's rise to power. Some will object that this indictment is unfair, that many penetrating books on communism, fascism, and Nazism have been written by historians, social scientists, and political philosophers; indeed, that the notion of totalitarianism itself got its currency and credit more from philosophy than from literature; and that at least one philosophical book on the subject—Hannah Arendt's *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951)—won a fame and exercised a power of fascination comparable to those of the literary works I have just mentioned. The objection is valid as far as it goes. We need to take stock of this momentous debate.

For political philosophers, dealing with Nazism and communism was difficult. These unprecedented *political* phenomena required a specific effort of analysis, yet most of the interpreters no longer had

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much place in their thought for political categories, especially the notion of *regime*. Their natural reaction was to make sense of these new forms of politics by subsuming them under nonpolitical categories with which they were more familiar. For instance, communism came to be understood as the domination of "bureaucracy," or as "bureaucratic state capitalism," a Trotskyist mantra widely used in France and elsewhere. As for Nazism, not a few on the left would see in it the instrument of "the most reactionary strata of financial capital," while many on the right saw just another avatar of "eternal Germany."

Of course these definitions, however fashionable for a time, could not long satisfy honest or discerning people, who eventually elaborated and gave credit to the notion of totalitarianism as a new and specific regime. We can be grateful to those who introduced this notion, because more than any other it helped us to look at the facts, to "save the phenomena," so to speak, and accordingly to evaluate more adequately the thorough ugliness of the whole thing. At the same time, however, totalitarianism remained an ad hoc construct. The discussion of it mainly concerned the marks, or criteria, of totalitarianism: whether "ideology" or "terror" or both together were principal or necessary components of any "totalitarian" regime. The proponents of the notion were prone to try to outbid one another by concentrating attention on the most extreme characteristics of these regimes, with the result that, as in Hannah Arendt's case, the notion is not even applicable to Nazism and communism except in their most extreme fits of terror and murder. This bidding war induced the mainstream of political scientists to renounce the notion completely, or to dilute it until it became unrecognizable and useless.

The facts of Nazism and communism obliged honest and discerning observers to elaborate the notion of a new regime. At the same time, this "regime" was the opposite of a regime. The classical regime, harking back to Plato's and Aristotle's first elaboration of political philosophy, is what gives political life its relative stability and intelligibility. The totalitarian "regime," on the contrary, was characterized first of all by its instability and its formlessness. It described itself, accurately, as essentially a *movement*: the "international Communist movement," or *die NZ-Bewegung* (Munich was called by the Nazis *die Hauptstadt der Bewegung* [the capital of the movement]). Arendt herself was acutely aware of the paradoxical character of totalitarianism. In a piece titled "Ideology and Terror," Arendt borrows from Montesquieu's analysis and classification of regimes to try to categorize the totalitarian regime. For Montesquieu, each regime has a nature and a principle. The principle is the more important, since it is the "spring" that "moves" the regime. Now, explains Arendt, totalitarianism has no principle, not even fear—which is the principle of "despotism" according to Montesquieu. For fear to be a principal motive of action, the individual would need to think or feel that he is able to escape danger through his own actions; under totalitarianism, on the other hand, where the killings wax and wane without any discernible reason, this sense cannot be sustained. Raymond Aron's commentary on Arendt's analysis is severe but illuminating:

> One cannot help asking oneself whether Mrs. Arendt's thesis, thus formulated, is not contradictory. A regime without a principle is not a regime. . . . As a regime, it exists solely in its author's imagination. In other words, when Mrs. Arendt elaborates some aspects of Hitlerite and Stalinist phenomena into a regime, a political essence, she brings out and probably exaggerates the originality of German or Russian totalitarianism. Mistaking this admittedly real originality for a fundamentally new regime, she is induced to read into our epoch the negation of classical philosophies and thus to slide into a contradiction: defining a working regime by an essence which so to speak implies the impossibility of its working.

This sharp criticism undoubtedly hits the mark. But Arendt would probably hit back that the "contradiction" is not of her making: it belongs to the "contradictory essence" of totalitarianism.

It is interesting to note that Alain Besançon, a distinguished French historian who studied with Aron, rediscovered and trenchantly brought out this difficulty twenty years later. In an article aptly titled "On the Difficulty of Defining the Soviet Regime," Besançon tries and exhausts Aristotle's and Montesquieu's classifications of regimes, concluding that the Soviet regime does not fit into any of them. In his eyes it is an "absolutely new" regime, and its newness lies in the part played by "ideology." Besançon proposes that instead of "totalitarianism" we simply classify communism as an "ideological regime." In their different ways, Arendt, Aron, and Besançon all draw our attention to the problem of relating totalitarianism to the tradition of political philosophy. The totalitarian regime seems to be the regime embodying the negation of the idea of regime, and accordingly the irrelevance of classical political philosophy.

More than any other thinker in this century, Leo Strauss tried to recover the genuine meaning of political philosophy. Indeed, political philosophy as

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originally understood owes its bare survival—fittingly unobtrusive to the point of secretiveness—to Leo Strauss' sole and unaided efforts. Without him, the philosophy of history, or historicism of any stripe, would have swallowed political philosophy completely. For Strauss, in seeming contradiction to what I have just said, twentieth-century experiences were motives for going back to political philosophy, specifically to *classical* political philosophy: "When we were brought face to face with tyranny—with a kind of tyranny that surpassed the boldest imagination of the most powerful thinkers of the past—our political science failed to recognize it. It is not surprising then that many of our contemporaries . . . were relieved when they rediscovered the pages in which Plato and other classical thinkers seemed to have interpreted for us the horrors of the twentieth century." Thus modern tyranny—Strauss carefully avoids the word "totalitarianism"—brings us back to ancient tyranny as described and understood by Plato and other Greek thinkers.

At the same time, Strauss makes clear that there is in modern tyranny something specific, and terrible, that eludes the grasp of classical categories. The return to the Greeks can only be a "first step toward an exact analysis of present-day tyranny," he argued, for contemporary tyranny is "fundamentally different" from the tyranny analyzed by the ancients. How could Strauss offer such a proposition? Recall that he devoted his life to establishing that classical philosophy elaborated the true understanding of the world, founded on nature which does not change, and that accordingly it does not need to be superseded or improved upon by a new "historical" understanding. Given that, how could Leo Strauss admit that communism and fascism are *fundamentally* new? How could the political life of man undergo a fundamental change? He answers: "Present-day tyranny, in contradistinction to classical tyranny, is based on the unlimited progress in the 'conquest of nature' which is made possible by modern science, as well as on the popularization or diffusion of philosophic or scientific knowledge."

Strauss was perfectly aware that such a change, or at least the possibility of such a change, needs to have been taken into account by Greek philosophy if the claim he raises on its behalf is to be upheld. He affirms that that is the case: "Both possibilities—the possibility of a science that issues in the conquest of nature and the possibility of the popularization of philosophy or science—were known to the classics. . . . But the classics rejected them as 'unnatural,' i.e., as destructive of humanity. They did not dream of present-day tyranny because they regarded its basic presuppositions as so preposterous that they turned their imagination in entirely different directions." Thus, the Greek thinkers did not imagine modern tyranny because they understood its principles and saw that they would be so much against nature that there was no use dwelling on them.

However galling the affirmation that the Greeks understood us better than we understand them, and ourselves, it is not what most impresses us in Strauss' assessment. It is rather that the two principles that make for the specific evil of modern tyranny are part and parcel of the foundation on which modern democracy was built. If this is true, modern tyranny would have as much in common with modern democracy as with ancient, i.e., "natural," tyranny.

We must not forget that these rare propositions of Strauss on contemporary political circumstances were formulated in the context of an exchange with Alexandre Kojève, one of the most influential interpreters of Hegel in this century. The Russian-born philosopher and French civil servant held that the conceptions of classical political philosophy have lost their relevance because the modern regime, or rather State, precisely through the transformation of nature and the reciprocal recognition implied in democratic citizenship, has basically solved the human problem. The unpalatable traits of modern "tyranny" must not blind us to the fact that "history has come to its end."

Thus Kojève is not much interested in the totalitarian phenomenon, the ugliness of which disappears against the big picture. However shocking Kojève's benign neglect, even favor, toward Communist totalitarianism, he does draw our attention to the disturbing fact that modern democracy shares with totalitarianism the claim to have solved the human problem. Modern democracy understands itself not as a regime among others, not even as the best regime, but as the only legitimate regime: it embodies the final, because rational, state of humanity.

Here we encounter a topic as difficult and intricate as it is important. In the classical understanding, the plurality of regimes was rooted in the intrinsic diversity of human nature, in the heterogeneity of its parts: human beings were soul and body, and the life of the human soul had its springs in the specific motions of its different parts. In the modern democratic understanding, a human being is first and foremost a self, and mankind as a whole is simply the fulfilled self writ large, which is to say, considered universally. This generalization is valid only if all the selves of all the human beings are in some important sense the same. The affirmation of the self, or the self-affirmation of humankind as composed of selves, thus presupposes the homogeneity of human nature. For the modern understanding, the solution of the human problem is one with the homogenization of human life.

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A mighty task—an indefinite one—is contained herein, because that homogeneity can never be complete, or it will be so only "at the end of history," when nature, human as well as nonhuman, will have been mastered. But in some sense, and this is Kojève's point, we have already reached a sufficient level of mastery. The science necessary for the conquest of nature is without end, it is true, but that means that its power is destined to grow without end, which means that reason allows us to imagine ourselves all-powerful already. As for human life proper, oppressive differences will long continue to arise, but they are in principle already vanquished by the declaration and institutionalization of the equality of rights. In brief, the miracles of science and the good works of democracy are attested enough to legitimate faith that liberal democracy has answered all the big questions of politics.

Of course faith can be lost. When the good works of democracy are less apparent, or when the delicate mechanisms of constitutional government, necessary for guaranteeing rights, are not available in a certain situation, the temptation arises to make good on the promises of democracy by every means available, that is, even or especially by antidemocratic means, to bring science to completion and achieve human homogeneity by overturning democracy.

Herein lies what has been aptly called the "totalitarian temptation." In this sense, as the French philosopher Claude Lefort has pointed out in *L'invention démocratique* (1981), his acute analysis of democracy, totalitarianism is the attempt to "embody" or "incorporate" democracy, to transform "indeterminate" democracy into a visible "body." Democracy is "indeterminate" because, in the democratic dispensation, the "seat of power" is "void"—occupied only provisionally by succeeding representatives. The King's presence was overwhelming; the democratic statesmen's is ordinarily underwhelming. As long as the citizens have not accustomed themselves to the worthy but modest function of choosing their representatives, the representatives will not be a match for the majesty of the people. Some demagogue will explain to the people that he will lead them to the empty place so that they *themselves* will occupy the seat of power: "Totalitarianism establishes a mechanism which . . . aims to weld anew power and society, to obliterate all the signs of social division, to banish the indetermination which haunts democratic experience. . . . From democracy and against it a body is thus made anew." When writing those lines, Lefort had principally in mind the Soviet regime, but it is clear that "race," no less than "class," can offer the basis for the building of this new homogeneous body.

Thus Lefort, drawing part of his inspiration from the phenomenological tradition, brings to our attention the bodily character of the political, or the political character of the body. This close relationship, although coming to the surface of speech in common expressions like "political body" or "body politic," has long been obscured in our democratic dispensation. Our forefathers, on the contrary, were well aware of it. Indeed how best to define the predemocratic order? If we look for one synthetic trait, then we will define it as an order founded on *filiation*. Everyone's place in society was in principle determined by his or her "birth." One's name and estate were determined through heritage. There were only families, poor or rich, common or noble, but each one governed by the head of family.

In contradistinction to ancient cities, in which heads of families were roughly equal politically and participated in the same "public space," in Western predemocratic societies there was no public space. Or rather, what was public was the family analogy, the logic of filiation and paternity, the fact that the same representation of the human ties or bonds circulated throughout the whole. Ultimately, what was public, that is, what was sacred, was the person of the King, that is, *the King's body*.

This familial order, based as it was on the fecundity of the body and on accidents of birth, strikes us today as bizarre and even disgusting. If we are sophisticated enough, we will say with cool competence: it was the value system of our forefathers, ours is different, and our grandchildren's will again be different from it and ours. I'm afraid I am not so sophisticated. This familial order was not just a value system or a cultural construct. It drew its strength, its durability, its quasi-universal validity (before democracy) from the general awareness that it was rooted not only in an undoubtedly natural fact, but in the fact that, so to speak, sums up "nature," that is, birth and filiation.

Even among scholars, it is a common mistake to confuse any political reference to "the body" with "organicism." It is then seen either as a mere figure of speech, or, more ominously, as a "holistic" representation fraught with oppressive potentialities. As a matter of fact, a "body" is very different from what is generally understood by "organism." In the latter, the part is strictly subordinated to the whole. In the former, the whole is present and active in each part. Thus the idea of the body is not at all a mechanical, or even a physical, idea. It is, on the contrary, a spiritual idea: each part is at the same time itself and the whole. In this sense, every society, every polity, is a body.

These very sketchy observations help us to understand the meaning and strength of the order of the body, and by the same token to wonder at its swift and

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nearly complete demise. Lefort describes the nature, and appreciates the enormity, of the process as follows:

> The ancien régime was made up of innumerable little bodies that provided people with their bearings. And those little bodies disposed themselves within a huge imaginary body of which the King's body offers a replica and the token of its integrity. The democratic revolution, long underground, blows up when the King's body is destroyed, when the head of the body politic falls to the ground, when accordingly the corporeity of society dissolves. Then something happens which I would dare to call the disincorporation of individuals. Extraordinary phenomenon. . . .

Why was it such an "extraordinary phenomenon"? To put it in a nutshell: while previous societies organized themselves so as to bind their members together, while they extolled the ideas of concord and unity, our democratic society organizes itself so as to untie, even to separate, its members, and thus guarantee their independence and their rights. In this sense, our society proposes to fulfill itself as a dis-society. An extraordinary phenomenon indeed!

But will not a society thus dissociating be unable to carry on, to say nothing of prospering? That is the recurrent fear in modern society, voiced by conservatives and socialists alike, with even a few liberals joining in at times. But as a matter of fact, belying all the prophets of doom, democratic societies have maintained their cohesion, they have prospered; indeed, they offer today—the vast bulk of mankind agrees on this point—the only viable and desirable way of organizing a decent common life. So we must infer that their continuous decomposition has been accompanied by a continuous recomposition. What is the principle of this recomposition? To cut a very long story short: it is the principle of *representation.* As Lefort emphasizes, the order of representation has succeeded the order of incorporation. And the principle behind the principle of representation is the *will*—the will of people—a purely spiritual principle. The ultimate mainspring of democratic society is the fecundity of human will, or rather the capacity of the will to produce desirable effects.

Let us retrace our journey so far. I have argued that totalitarianism has been the *experimentum crucis* for political philosophy in this century, and that political philosophy, thus tested, was found wanting. We are able now to give a more precise assessment. The perplexities that attend the inquiry into the nature of totalitarian regimes do not arise solely from the peculiarly enigmatic essence of those regimes. Or rather, their enigmatic essence derives from another enigma or uncertainty, one that also concerns democracy. The uncertainty is this: where, and what, is the people's will? How can a purely spiritual principle give form and life to a body politic? The "totalitarian temptation" is made possible by, and takes place in, the uncharted territory between the "body" of predemocratic society and the "soul" of democratic politics. There is much more here than a glib metaphor. Indeed, we are at the heart of our practical and theoretical difficulties: herein lies the task of political philosophy, if it cares to have one.

We need to return again and again to the contrast between predemocratic and democratic societies, and to the dialectics between the two. This insistence may seem odd to Americans, since the U.S. had no real experience of predemocratic society and does not seem to be worse off for it: as Tocqueville so memorably said, "Americans are born equal, instead of becoming so." But my proposal is for a philosophical inquiry, not a historical one.

We begin with a paradox. We instinctively think that predemocratic societies gave an advantage to the soul as opposed to the body, even as we instinctively suppose that democratic societies have rejected the excessive pretensions of the soul and have "liberated the body," or, in Saint-Simonian parlance, "rehabilitated the flesh." These impressions are not simply erroneous; there is much truth in them. But at the same time we could say that the opposite also is true. We have seen that predemocratic societies were "incorporated" societies, rooted in the fecundity of the body, culminating in the King's body. As for democratic societies, while they are not particularly religious, they are politically and morally spiritualist, even otherwordly. Electing a representative, unlike begetting an heir, is the work of the will—of the mind or the soul.

That spirituality holds true not only in political relations, but in social and moral life as well. Democratic societies typically insist that all our bonds, including our bodily ones, have their origin in a purely spiritual decision, a decision reached in full spiritual sovereignty. We reject any suggestion that the body could create bonds by itself, that there could be ties rooted essentially in the "flesh." The "new family" results from the growing understanding of marriage and parenthood as "continuous choice." Even bodily intercourse is no longer supposed to create bonds by itself, to have meaning by itself: it does so only as far, and as long, as the will makes it so. Such meaning the will is free to confer and withdraw "at will." We increasingly behave, and we increasingly interpret our behavior, as if we were angels who happen to have bodies. Carnal *knowledge* is no longer such.

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No wonder, then, that what goes by the name of political philosophy or theory today is rather angelology. In an otherwordly space—perhaps separated from this earth by a "veil of ignorance"—beings who are no longer, or not yet, truly human deliberate over the conditions under which they would consent to land on our lowly planet and don our "too solid flesh." They hesitate a lot, as well they might, and their abstract reasonings are complex and multifarious, if so hypothetical that they carry little weight. Political thought cannot indulge indefinitely to live in an atmosphere that is at the same time rarefied and vulgar. Totalitarianism, it is true, has been defeated without much contribution from political philosophy, and democracy seems to sail on unchallenged. But even in practical terms, it is not prudent to lean exclusively on the workaday virtues of the democratic citizenry.

We need to recapture something of what democracy left behind in its march to supremacy. Modern democracy has successfully asserted and realized the homogeneity of human life, but it is now required to try to recover and salvage the intrinsic heterogeneity of human experiences. The experience of the citizen is different from that of the artist, which in turn is different from that of the religious person, and so on. These decisive articulations of human life would be hopelessly blurred if the current conceit prevailed that every human being, as "creator of his or her own values," is at the same time an artist, a citizen, and a religious person—indeed, all these things and more. Against this conceit, political philosophers should undertake to bring to light again the heterogeneity of human life.

It might be argued that this heterogeneity is adequately taken care of through the public acknowledgment of the legitimate plurality of human values. Nothing could be more mistaken. As Leo Strauss once tersely remarked, pluralism is a monism, being an -ism. The same self-destructive quality attaches itself to our "values." To interpret the world of experience as constituted of admittedly diverse "values" is to reduce it to this common genus, and thus to lose sight of that heterogeneity we wanted to preserve. If God is a value, the public space a value, the moral law within my heart a value, the starry sky above my head a value . . . what is not? At the same time, for this is confusion's great masterpiece, the "value language" makes us lose the unity of human life—this necessary component of democratic self-consciousness—just as it blurs its diversity: you don't argue about values since their value lies in the valuation of the one who puts value on them. Value language, with the inner dispositions it encourages, makes for dreary uniformity and unintelligible heterogeneity at the same time.

Certainly Max Weber would look with consternation on a state of things he unwillingly did so much to advance. As *Science as a Vocation* makes clear, he devoted his uncommon strength of mind and soul to the task for which I have just entered my feeble plea: to recover, or to salvage, the genuine diversity of human experiences. He was undoubtedly right to underline that the Beautiful is not the same as the Good or the True. But then, or so it seems to me, he crossed the line. Why interpret this internal differentiation of human life as a conflict, even as a "war"—the "war of the gods" attendant to the "polytheism" of human "values"? Why say that we know that some things are beautiful *because* they are not good? Why say that we know that some beings are good or holy *because* and *inasmuch as* they are not beautiful? It seems that Weber here let himself be carried away by the restlessness of his spirit. How impatient we moderns have become! If two things don't match exactly, then they must be enemies.

Perhaps we have been impatient and restless from the beginning. Was not Descartes, the father of Enlightenment, as well the father of our impatience when he deliberately equated what is doubtful with what is false? How much wiser in my opinion was Leibniz, who tranquilly countered that what is true is true, what is false is false, and what is doubtful is . . . well, it is doubtful. We need Leibniz's equanimity more than Descartes' impatience, so that we may sojourn within our different experiences, and draw from each its specific lesson.

The same human being, after all, admires what is beautiful, is motivated by what is good, and pursues the truth. Sometimes he comes across a "brave bad man," as it befell Lord Clarendon; or he meets a fair treacherous woman. These complexities, sometimes even incongruities, of human experience need to be described accurately. Generally, the more bold the colors, the less exact the drawing. Human life does not warrant despair, and the social sciences do not warrant nihilism, because human life is humanly intelligible.

It is possible, even probable, that the democratic regime could not have come into being without the impatience of Descartes and others; it is possible as well that democratic citizens would have fallen asleep if not for the strident clarion calls of Weber and others. But victorious and mature democracy would do well to temper these extreme moods and open itself to the inner diversity of human experience as it claims to be open to the outer diversity of the human species. This would seem to be a tall order: for now, at least, few political philosophers have given it heed. FT

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To Wonder Again

Eric S. Cohen

Modern societies are the best-equipped in history at satisfying man's immediate desires: food is fast and plentiful; shelter is comfortable and extravagant; gadgets and devices simplify our lives; the Internet puts a worldwide market at our fingertips; modern medicine prolongs life, eases suffering, and even dulls, at least temporarily, psychological despair; birth control all but guarantees sex without responsibility; and television supplies endless varieties of ready-made entertainment. Modern man is safe (except in certain parts of certain cities or when madmen strike in unsuspecting places), mobile, and autonomous; and his civilization is the most democratic, the most advanced, and the most prosperous in human history—leading some scholars to ponder whether mankind has reached "the end of history."

And yet, pessimists abound on both the right and the left. Robert Bork laments the erosion of America's moral fabric at the hands of corrosive liberalism. In *Earth in the Balance*, Al Gore assails American society as "corrupt" and "inauthentic" and compares the modern age to an ecological Holocaust. Feminists decry the oppression of women and multiculturalists decry the oppression of minorities. Men and women of faith condemn the secular culture that pushes biblical morality from the public square. Conservatives bemoan the cultural elite's assault on American values, only to criticize the American public for its lack of outrage during the impeachment of President Clinton. Everyone seems angry or insulted about something, even as a majority of Americans are too busy, too happy, or too cynical to vote. And even those who declare the end of history do so with a note of despair, fearing that man has given up on the higher ideals and grand questions that fueled the great clashes, but also the greatness, of the past.

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Obviously, we cannot judge modernity by its material achievements alone; and it is always wise to take social critics with a grain of salt, since they frequently lack the moderation to appreciate the complexity of their surroundings. For the fact is that modernity embraces and promotes multiple human types. The question—Who is the quintessential character of our civilization? Is he someone to be admired or lamented?—suggests numerous, often contradictory, answers. Is it the high-tech entrepreneur or the organization man? The soccer mom or the pregnant teenager? The little-boy killers at Littleton or the martyr who gave her life instead of renouncing her faith in God? The millions of children on Ritalin and Prozac or the ambitious overachievers who flock to SAT preparation courses? The spirited or the apathetic? The unforgiving ideologues or the nonjudgmental relativists?

Plato said that the human city is the soul writ large, and so it should not surprise us that the city, like man, is mired in these and other contradictions. But among the confusions of modernity certain human types can, I think, be identified. In prosperous times, the "middling" sort prevails. He is neither totally aimless nor totally satisfied. He struggles to balance the gifts of modernity with its lack of answers to man's permanent questions. He is, as Tocqueville noted 150 years ago, "restless amidst abundance." And thus he is susceptible to certain maladies of the soul: debased irony and cynicism, which reduce life to absurdity; a therapeutic ethic, which deifies the self and devalues virtue and transcendence; the revolutionary spirit, which denies the fact of human limitation or rebels against all tradition and restraint; and, most common, the life of the bourgeois egoist, who is decent and practical but spiritually unsatisfied.

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The old orthodoxies of modernity are exhausted. The only question is whether these sad wanderings will lead man to terminal trivialization and despair or to a rediscovery of his transcendent, eternal, and revealed purpose.

In *The Closing of the American Mind*, Allan Bloom indicts American youth as languid, empty, and adrift. "They can be anything they want to be," writes Bloom, "but they have no particular reason to want to be anything in particular. . . . Why are we surprised that such unfurnished persons should be preoccupied principally with themselves and with finding means to avoid permanent free fall?" The moral drifter has no responsibilities, no hope, and no purpose. He is free from all commitments and tries not to concern himself with the perilous questions of life and death. He is a stranger, a tourist, an indifferent observer. He is the television-watcher, the apathetic consumer, the college student who stares blankly for four years from the back of the classroom, waiting, he says, for real life to begin.

The drifter is homeless. Nothing is stable or binding in his life, and so he always expects the arbitrary and the fleeting. Divorced from tradition, nature, and the old responsibility of upholding the family name, the drifter does what advertisers tell him or what his urges urge him. He has sex when it's convenient but never falls in love. His parents are divorced or distant, and his home life is dominated by the anxious extremes of yelling and silence.

When it comes to politics, culture, and morality, the drifter is tolerant by default. He does not judge others because he is unwilling, afraid, or unable to judge himself. His life boils down to the defensive statement, "I'm not bothering anyone." He focuses almost entirely on himself, and yet he is, at bottom, ambivalent toward himself, holding no strong opinions one way or another. This is not humility, since humility affirms a transcendent good—a God—that is a source of wonder, forgiveness, and guidance. Indifference is just the opposite: it destroys the sacred altogether, taking all things as equal and as equally nonbinding.

To the drifter, everything is at best a game, a joke, an ironic play. If he is not entirely humorless, the sadness of the drifter is softened by easy pleasures, repackaged humor, and childish naughtiness. He sits for hours in front of the television, remote control in hand, flipping from station to station, sitcom to sitcom, with nothing in particular to watch and nothing in particular to do. He is not horribly sad, but he is bound by nothing, loves nothing, reveres nothing. He is totally passive, and dislikes himself, but only vaguely, and not enough to do anything about it, since he really has no idea what he ought to do. His laughs are short, and he does not make jokes; he only retells them.

Ironic distance is the drifter's last recourse—the snide filter that reduces all things big and small to one sad unobtrusive monotone. Humans are ridiculous creatures, and we have always been smart enough to laugh at our foibles, our shortcomings, and our failure to live up to the better parts of our natures. This gap between man the stumbler and man the exalted is the heart of all irony and humor, from Shakespeare and Aristophanes to *The Simpsons* and *Saturday Night Live*. And yet there is a crucial difference between low irony and high, between an irony that narrowly debunks and one that points out the distance between the high and the low, the sacred and the profane.

The low irony of our age has nothing to contribute beyond the observation that life is absurd. It is all debunking; it leads men nowhere. High irony, by contrast, is funny precisely because it retains a memory of man's seriousness. It points man toward higher meanings by pointing out the absurdity, the baseness, and the limits of the low. To the high ironist, everything is not a game, and so he often treads dangerously on sacred ground; to the low ironist, by contrast, nothing is sacred, reverence is impossible, and the only salvation is that others are crazier than you are. Which explains, in part, why so many people watch daytime talk shows—the infamous *Jerry Springer Show*, for example—that turn men's basest instincts into public spectacles.

The cynic, like the ironist, sees only the absurd and nothing beyond. Irony and cynicism are variations on a theme, which is why cynics are typically quite funny to the rest of us (at least for a while), if only partially so to themselves. The cynic expects the dark before even looking. He is blind to joy, blind to transcendence, blind even to the simplest goodness. The cynic's heart has contracted, and his intellect is cold. The exacting cynic can be rather useful, since he sees through utopian schemes and sentimental solutions. He recognizes the limits of man but sees none of the possibilities. He offers no basis for restoration, no direction, no hope. All he sees is a world worthy of resentment, a world that brings only suffering and hypocrisy, a world that is ultimately silent and empty.

Dark irony—the irreverent blend of irony and cynicism—is the dominant sensibility in American popular culture. It combines the debunking style of the ironist with the cynical sense of life and death as profane fodder for amusement—a genre aptly titled "pulp fiction." In the recent film by that name, for example, professional killers engage in trivial repartee as they load their weapons and head upstairs to do their work. Once inside, one of the killers (Samuel Jackson) admires the tastiness of a soon-to-be victim's fast food burger and beverage, then immediately switches into the role of a dark prophet, reciting a passage about

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vengeance from the biblical book of Ezekiel before killing everyone in the room. In the wildly popular cartoon show and movie *South Park*, the running joke is that one of the children dies every episode, which his friends find wildly amusing. The show's first episode—a bloody fight between Santa Claus and Jesus over who is the real Christmas hero—became a cult hit and led to cover stories in *Newsweek* and *Rolling Stone*.

The morality behind both *Pulp Fiction* and *South Park* is the same: death is funny, nothing is sacred, and everything is absurd. The thirst for meaning, order, and wholeness—which marked the philosophical absurdity of Samuel Beckett and Albert Camus—is gone. There are only fragments of sacred traditions, which are cut and pasted together with postmodern trivialities. There is no tragedy, because there is no longing for something better; there is only darkness, and the futile laughter of a trivializing culture.

Nor is this simply a chimerical culture without consequences. Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, the Littleton killers, "whooped and hollered like it was a game" (in the words of one of the survivors) as they acted out the "Gothic" roles glamorized by popular culture and murdered twelve of their classmates. The same nation that mourns over the mayhem at Littleton chuckles at the pop nihilism that comes out of Hollywood—and sees no contradiction.

Meanwhile, the philosophers teach us that art and reality are the same, since "reality," including moral reality, is just an arbitrary construct. The deconstructionists and postmodernists who rule over the academy are simply ironists and cynics in different guises. The deconstructionist actively (and spitefully) debunks order and tradition. He attempts to show that morality and reason are illusions. Postmodernists, for their part, celebrate the splintering of morality as the happy emancipation of the mature self, who is left to cut and paste reality as he desires. "Postmodern ironists," says Richard Rorty, are "never quite able to take themselves seriously" because they are "always aware that the terms in which they describe themselves are subject to change, always aware of the contingency and fragility of their final vocabularies, and thus themselves." Many postmodernists celebrate the Internet as the structural underpinning of the postmodern world, since it allows individuals to adopt multiple personae, switch genders, and indulge whatever fantasies.

The college freshman, whose moral sensibilities have been shaped largely by the darkly ironic world of popular culture, arrives at the university with already diminished expectations. Instead of being led out of the cave, or at least pointed in the right direction, his professors tell him that irony is all there is, that his unsatisfying instincts are the summit of human understanding, that he has already arrived, because the destination is "nowhere and anywhere." They tell him that "reality" is simply the "prisonhouse of language"; that life is merely an empty struggle between oppressors and oppressed; that eccentricity, revolution, and irony are the only "authentic" ways to live in the "abyss." Most students, thankfully, settle for irony, which they already know. And in the end, the distance between philosophy and conventional sensibilities collapses: students leave just as they began—darkly ironic, with any vestiges of hope and wonder slowly dying inside them.

Therapy attempts to console such empty and wayward souls. In the therapeutic universe, the goal of human life is not virtue or grace but sanity and self-esteem. Therapy displaces the moral categories of good and evil, the philosophical categories of truth and falsehood, and the spiritual categories of reverence and faith. As sociologist James Nolan explains, "Where older moral orders looked to a transcendent being, to a covenantal community, to natural law, or to divine reason to provide the substantive basis for culture's moral boundaries, the therapeutic ethos establishes the self as the ultimate object of allegiance." This new focus on the self is not self-examination in the Socratic sense, since that would require some ultimate criteria, such as truth, God, or reality. Rather, the turn inward is wholly self-regarding; it is, at bottom, an act of desperation in the face of an empty culture.

For while postmodernists may celebrate the great divorce of the self from ultimate criteria, the ineradicable fact of suffering and death and the inherent human longing for meaningful order and social attachment dictate that some moral vocabulary will fill the void. Man cannot stand alone in the face of eternity: he needs the comfort of purpose, the peace of forgiveness, and the confidence of truth. The therapeutic ethic has attempted to fill the void by, as Anthony Giddens puts it, "dispensing with the great riddles of life in exchange for a modest and durable well-being." It attempts to build an anesthetized Garden of Eden, redefining both sadness (now called "depression") and sinfulness (now called "mental illness" or "addiction") as chemical or psychological pathologies, thus recasting the cause of the primordial fall as a psychiatric disorder. Freud, who reinterpreted the panorama of human experience in pathological terms, provided the moral and cultural vocabulary for this fundamental shift in human self-understanding. In Freud's universe, sanity is the best one can hope to achieve—an empty category when compared with biblical holiness, Christian grace, or philosophical ascent.

In the most sympathetic interpretation, the therapeutic ethic is a humanitarian, well-meaning effort to

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restore meaning and purpose to people's lives by establishing the self as the "ultimate object of allegiance." Therapy today attempts to overcome Freud's tragic conclusion—namely, that the primal self conflicts with the demands of civilization—by freeing the self from all demands, restraints, responsibilities, and anxieties. Individuals turn inward, define themselves entirely by their subjective emotions, and become responsible only to themselves. The only external reference points are the interpretive frameworks of the therapists, who pathologize anxiety and transgression as a series of illnesses, such as "Impulse Control Disorder" and "Adjustment Disorder with Anxious Mood." These classifications are taken from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Disorders,* put out by the American Psychiatric Association, which estimates that "one in four adults will suffer from a mental illness or substance abuse disorder in any [given] year." According to a recent Surgeon General's report, one-half of all Americans will suffer from a mental illness in their lifetime.

But while therapy may temporarily pacify its patients, it does not inform man's truest, most persistent longings; it does not help the "self" address the most important human questions. Instead, it creates a moral universe where nothing is demanded of individuals, who are reduced to mere creatures of appetite, prone to "emotional imbalances," and so totally dependent on therapeutic drugs and experts.

By redefining responsibility inward, the therapeutic ethic devalues virtue, transcendence, and duty to others. The individual is left on shaky, unsatisfying ground, while all the worst features of modern society—atomization, fragmentation, sentimental response—are bolstered by a new class of therapists and counselors. Man is subdued but not saved, quieted but not answered, excused but not forgiven. And in the end, the therapeutic self—like the ironist, the cynic, and the drifter—cannot help but be moved by his own self-conscious mortality, by his experience of smallness, or by his ineradicable, as yet unanswered, spiritual needs. The humanness of human beings inevitably revolts. But without the old maps to guide them, the old traditions to direct them, or the old ideals to awaken them to their better angels, such revolt is either self-indulgent or utopian; and it leads only to disruption and despair.

Revolt has taken many forms in the modern age, but three predominate: revolt against the ordinary, against the political order, and against the transcendent. The first—revolt against the ordinary—spans human experience from the mundane to the drastic: tattoos, body piercings, daredevil stunts, abnormal eroticism. Of course, when informed by some noble purpose, an honest spirit, and the humility that befits man's estate, this thirst for the extraordinary can lead to creativity and insight. But when transgression becomes a desperate act, a camouflaged cry in the wilderness, it corrupts both the individual and the city. The revolutionary screams out for a unique place in the universe, for meaning and purpose, for the thrill of extremes. But without any basis to discriminate, without reverence or humility, the revolutionary denies that much of what is ordinary is good. That, or his pride leads him to deny that norms, nature, or tradition apply to him.

Political revolt exaggerates the will to greatness or mere recognition into a social program. Having abandoned transcendent truths or the notion of God the Redeemer, revolutionaries embrace an apocalyptic politics. They claim to hold the secret—indeed, the destiny—to deliver man from wretched imperfection to this-worldly utopia.

Following Marx, the revolutionary frames his apocalyptic vision in populist terms; he promises to liberate the oppressed from the status-quo power structure. And yet, the typical revolutionary has nothing but contempt for the "small-minded morality" of ordinary people, who fail to join the revolution and instead place their hope in God and family. The revolutionary frames his program as the march of progress, the new beginning. But its reality is dark, as repeatedly failed attempts at the perfection or liberation of man lead to increasingly unsavory methods—what Lenin unapologetically called "cracking the eggs."

The revolutionary is spiritually and metaphysically sick, which explains the desperation of his politics. He cannot accept the fact of human limitation, because he has rejected—or lost—the moral, philosophical, and religious ways of knowing that make limitation bearable and meaningful. He cannot accept the imperfectability of man or the apparent smallness of his own place in the universe. He cannot accept the slow, imperfect business of political reform or the anonymity of altruism; he wants, instead, to be the liberator of mankind. The revolutionary's soul is hardened; he lacks what G. K. Chesterton called the "wondrous vision of the child." Instead, he wants "peak experiences"—such as acid trips or the momentary god experience of defying death. He has no time for kindness and no gratitude for life's blessings or even life itself.

As with the therapeutic ethic, the revolutionary ethic recasts the theology of good and evil as a secular struggle: the power elite versus the oppressed; affirmative action supporters versus hate-mongers and racists; friends of the environment versus environmental Nazis; tolerant multiculturalists versus ethnocentric imperialists. And again, as with therapy, ide-

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ologies of liberation appeal to the desperate, the cynical, and those who simply long for the moral self-congratulation that seems to be missing from their modern cosmopolitan lives. As Vaclav Havel observed:

> Ideology offers human beings the illusion of an identity, of dignity, and of morality while making it easier to part with them. As the repository of something "supra-personal" and objective, it enables people to deceive their conscience and conceal their true position and their inglorious modus vivendi, both from the world and from themselves. . . . It is a veil behind which human beings can hide their own "fallen existence," their trivialization, and their adaptation to the status quo.

In an age of moral anomie, ideology promises order; it channels anxiety and especially resentment into a full-fledged moral, political, and teleological program. It gives extremism the appearance of heroism and ignores inconvenient facts in favor of unforgiving revolutionary action. The retreat into ideology splits the social world into irreconcilable camps, where public discourse becomes an impossible war of all against all and ideals become hollow tools of party and power. For those who fall prey to it, ideology really offers no dignity at all; it cannot speak to the deepest human longings in a satisfying way. It offers only struggle, and ends up reducing life to empty categories, constant revolution, and a quest for power only thinly veiled behind the utopian rhetoric of justice.

The final revolt is against the very ideas of good and evil; it is the last act in the modern drama of liberation, and Nietzsche is its playwright. Nietzsche's superman accepts no truth that is not of his own making. He is a creator, a comic poet. He is totally free, bound by nothing except his own imagination, his shamelessness, and his creative transgression. In the end, however, he challenges mortality and loses. He closes the pathway to transcendence, and therefore eliminates the meaning of death—since, at best, he leaves an ambiguous mark on a world that he has defined as transient, arbitrary, and empty. He resents the silence of the universe; he resents the God who doesn't exist; and so he attempts to become a god himself—and fails.

The revolutionary spirit thrives in certain pockets of American society: the university, the environmental movement, the bitter politics of race, large segments of the art world. Together with therapy, it is the false cure for the most self-hating members of the bourgeoisie—the comfortable winners, who feel guilty about their success and doubt the purpose of their lives. And so they tolerate revolutionary ideas, even celebrate them, as a way to supply their own ambition with a moral justification, their own cynicism with a program, and their own wealth and power with the nobility it seems to lack.

But the corrosive influence of the revolutionary ethic (especially the revolt against morality) extends far beyond the so-called cultural elite. For while most Americans still embrace notions of right and wrong, they are less willing and less able than ever before to judge between them. Most such men and women lead watered-down versions of the old bourgeois lives. But they take no particular pride in doing so and would never impose their "lifestyles" on others. They cling to the leftover capital of traditional morality, but they are less steadfast in defending virtue against those who zealously deny its claim.

Most Americans, thankfully, are neither revolutionaries nor drifters, the two deadening extremes of modern man's spiritual sickness. They waver but do not fall (at least not too far). They occasionally shrug off the apparent meaninglessness of their lives, and so retreat into prosaic amusements and blank stares. They occasionally seek revolutionary answers to their spiritual problems. But for the most part, Americans chart a middle course. The problem, as Irving Kristol has observed, is that "the full range of man's spiritual nature . . . makes more than middling demands upon the universe, and demands more than middling answers."

Most Americans are decent, if at times morally lazy, a touch self-absorbed, and deficient in gratitude for the comforts they have come to think of as rights. They are loyal friends, coworkers, and teammates; they care about their children (which, in the age of divorce, often means making tolerable arrangements with their former spouses), take pride in their homes, and show up to work on time. Most Americans meet the demands of the day, even if they stumble occasionally. They are eminently practical, even if they sometimes seem oblivious to the deeper meanings that such practical wisdom ought to preserve.

In the balancing act of means and ends, the nation's scales are tipped toward the means, which is perhaps the way it must be in stable and prosperous regimes. Americans are, with relatively few exceptions, well-housed, well-fed, and well-entertained, and thus rarely are they faced sharply with the fact of human limitation, except in sickness, tragedy, or war. (Though even war has become a distant, technological affair, especially for Americans, who have come to expect victories without losses and who have a diminishing memory of the experience of warfare.)

Americans embrace irony in their entertainments and cynicism when it's fashionable. They never criticize their friends who see therapists or take Prozac,

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since they know, heaven forbid, that they could be next. They are cavalier, even-tempered, and comfortable. But there is a spiritual restlessness about them, a vague disquiet with business as usual. They are short on gratitude but have "volunteer" written down somewhere on a things-to-do list. They always send a check to their favorite charity, when they are not worn down by "compassion fatigue."

In short, most Americans are realists and egoists—not the cold, contemptuous individuals portrayed by Ayn Rand, but the considerate sort, who open doors, help with the dishes, and take pride in being kind and generous, assuming the sacrifice is not too great. Such individuals are rationally moral—they do what's right because it's right, ultimately, but also because it preserves the right appearances. Egoists are ambitious; they seek prestige, originality, and influence as the most important achievements. But they are also realists; they are worldly and calculating, and tend to preserve and build (usually wealth) rather than deconstruct. They are not, at bottom, driven by a love of material goods (though they are attentive consumers), but by the desire for autonomy—and specifically, the desire to build for themselves and their families a suburban air-conditioned shelter from the uncertainties and impersonalities of modern life. Their ultimate goal is to retire early so that they can "do what they really want to do"—which is usually something admirable, such as spend time with their families, or something harmless, such as play golf.

For most such egoists, pursuit of self-interest is moderated by other longings—a real desire to do good, love of family and friends, a sense of honor and decency. In short, most egoists have limits, and the drives of their ego are tempered by the realization that life alone, even life at the top, is lonely and unsatisfying. The torment of the egoist is in trying to balance what often appear to him as competing goods—between work and family, success and leisure, ambition and virtue. The egoist struggles to see the good, and often experiences life as an endless calculation of means and ends, where both the efficacy of the means and the meaning of the ends are perpetually uncertain. He is often torn between his hardened worldly self and his wish to lead a more charitable life. He struggles with the periodic realization of his own limits, the pangs of his conscience, and his longing for deeper meanings. He wavers between satisfaction and angst, all the while making sure not to lose ground in the social world of reputation and reward, always making sure to get things done, even if he is never certain why he does them and is never entirely satisfied with the results.

The instincts of the bourgeoisie are to be admired, not criticized. But these instincts are not enough for a complete life; they are the means, not the end; the tools, not the design. Many Baby Boomers, now in their forties and fifties, have begun to realize that comfort and security are important but limited. Confronted ever more clearly with the fact of their own mortality, they are beginning to consider the fundamental questions of existence, which they have ignored, feared, or actively forgotten for much of their lives. They are beginning to realize, in a deeper way, their own limits—not just the final limit of death, but their own growing anxiety about the "why" of existence and the robustness of their souls.

The spiritual searches of Baby Boomers have taken many directions, some admirable and ennobling, others drastic and destructive. Some renounce the world as fallen and proclaim themselves as among the few who will be saved—the Denver-based "Concerned Christians" cult, for example, whose members were deported from Israel last year for plotting a gunfight in the belief that it would hasten the apocalypse. Others are sentimental; they celebrate the "oneness of all things" and the "inner child" who can do no wrong. Some want to spiritualize their workaday lives—evident in best-selling books like *The Tao of Abundance* and *What Would Buddha Do? 101 Answers to Life's Daily Dilemmas.* Others have abandoned modern life altogether; they retreat to ashrams in the Himalayas, wellness centers, or underground swamis. Or they join strange, often ruinous cults, such as the Raelians and Heaven's Gate.

But the best among them, the true seekers, just want to be better human beings; they are, as philosopher Peter Emberley puts it, "simply looking for a little grace and an opportunity to express indebtedness, fidelity, and reverence." They seek, above all, a source of forgiveness for their shortcomings and a source of strength in their quest for self-renewal, which neither irony nor cynicism, therapy nor revolution, can ever truly provide.

The modern age is tremendous for its accomplishments: wealth, comfort, more equal opportunity, scientific discovery. But despite its achievements, modernity lacks answers to man's fundamental questions; it lacks the transcendent vision that makes life joyful and death meaningful; and, as Daniel Bell and others have observed, its very success often undermines its virtues. Wealth degenerates into indulgence; tolerance degenerates into unthinking relativism; science without philosophy reduces man to a laboratory study; technology without humility tempts him into dangerous projects, such as cloning, and into the illusion of divinity and immortality. For all his

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accomplishments, modern man needs his ancient forebears, who provide better answers to his most enduring questions.

Indeed, as Leon Kass and others have argued, the prospect of genetic engineering brings modernity to a crossroads. It raises once inconceivable questions: Do humans have to die? Is the purpose of knowledge to overcome death? To the scientists and technologists on the "cutting edge," immortality is the final triumph of man over nature; man becomes the irreverent creator, the technological superman (or at least some men do, while the rest of us, like it or not, are condemned to live in the dystopian world they are creating).

The ancients knew better, and it is to their old wisdom that modern man must return. In both the classical and biblical vision, death awakens man to the preciousness of life; mortality awakens him to the possibility of transcendence; and constant recognition of his own imperfection reminds him of the need for restraint and repentance.

In his misplaced quest for autonomy—freedom from want, freedom from morality, freedom from death—modern man has forgotten how to see; he has turned his back on his essential nature. He treats the human experience of incompleteness—the fact of suffering, alienation, and death—as a problem to be solved, a sickness to be cured, a stirring to be forgotten. And so he forgets what his wise and wondering ancestors remembered—that man is not fully of this world; that the beginning of wisdom is not only realizing the limits of one's knowledge but the ultimate meaning of one's limits.

Reverence is not dead in America, as the religious response to the Littleton massacre, the continuing strength of faith in the most degraded parts of America's inner cities, and the recent surge of public-policy interest in faith-based organizations all demonstrate. The military code still honors and preserves the virtues of courage, discipline, and temperance. The motto "In God We Trust" remains at the center of American self-understanding.

Even as the disorders of the age continue to worsen, there are signs of an awakening. The modern age of religious wandering is approaching the top (or bottom) of its (inverse) crescendo: some, thankfully, want to live again or for the first time by different notes, better notes, older notes. They want to restore the tattered old maps that they know to exist. It is too soon to tell whether the spiritual seekers of our age can restore modernity from within, or even restore faithful platoons inside the spiritual desert: the crescendo may be too loud, the wandering may continue indefinitely. But that is no reason not to hope, no reason not to wonder, no reason not to yearn for holiness in a disenchanted age. FT

Desert Confirmation

They say these people are poor and
there are tremors somewhere near.

The immaculate dark child in pink
lace with roses gracing her hair
and tiny white-gloved hands
(her brother properly white-
shirted, barely weaned)
beneath the crucifix seems
safe within walls
that image violence
transformed forever.

Joyce Crain

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The Very Idea of Religion

Paul J. Griffiths

The study of religion as an academic discipline is now close to a century and a half old. In the United States, at least, it appears to be flourishing. There are scores of university departments devoted to it, several hundred doctoral degrees earned in it each year, a professional organization (the American Academy of Religion) that draws almost ten thousand people to its yearly meetings, and numerous journals (most, it is true, with a small circulation and a smaller readership) for publication of the writings of those who identify themselves with the discipline.

And yet it is a scholarly enterprise without an identity, one that lacks any widely shared understanding of its central topic, or of the methods appropriate to the study of this topic. This may seem puzzling. After all, the idea that there is such a thing as religion (and that it is important) is enshrined in the foundational texts of the American republic, and in its legislative, bureaucratic, and judicial procedures. The First Amendment guarantees freedom of it (or at least that Congress shall neither establish it nor prevent its free exercise); the IRS must often decide whether an institution is sufficiently religious to be granted tax privileges; Congress and the states have often made laws in which religion figures prominently (recall the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act and its more recent clones passed by several state legislatures); and, most obviously, the courts must often rule as to whether some belief or practice is or is not religious.

In their public forums and official voices, then, as well as in their private discussions, America and Americans have a lot to say about religion. Listening to these discussions, though, rapidly suggests the conclusion that hardly anyone has any idea what they are talking about—or, perhaps more accurately, that there are so many different ideas in play about what religion is that conversations in which the term figures significantly make the difficulties in communication at the Tower of Babel seem minor and easily dealt with. These difficulties are apparent, too, in the academic study of religion, and they go far toward an explanation of why the discipline has no coherent or widely shared understanding of its central topic.

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Superficially, perhaps, matters are clear enough at the formal level. "Religion" picks out a genus of which there are many species, and we all know what at least some of the species are: Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and so on. It is, in this formal respect, a term just like "currency," a genus whose species include dollars, deutschmarks, pounds, and yen. But while there is fairly widespread agreement about what makes it reasonable to say that dollars and deutschmarks are species of the same genus (and about what genus they're a species of), there is much less about what makes it reasonable to say that Islam and Buddhism are species of the same genus (and about what genus they're a species of). There are few impassioned arguments about whether something is or is not a currency, but many about whether something is or is not a religion and even more about whether some action, event, or belief does or does not merit the label "religious."

This state of affairs wouldn't have worried Parson Thwackum, an aggressively insular Anglican priest in Henry Fielding's novel *Tom Jones*, first published in 1749. Thwackum takes the high stipulative road in talking about religion: "When I mention religion," he says, "I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and

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not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England." Thwackum uses the term "religion" as a label for the beliefs and practices of his preferred form of Christianity, his church; this provides him with the essential characteristics of the genus, and thereby also the means to judge whether anything else can be said to be a species of it. On this view, the Church of England is the ideal type of religion; other forms of life can be called religions just to the extent that they approximate or approach it. This is a theological (or, as much contemporary scholarship in religion would have it, an ideological) understanding and use of the term "religion." It is also, arguably, just the kind of understanding of religion evident in the thought of such otherwise very different figures as the founding fathers of this republic and the present Pope—though they would have agreed neither with Thwackum nor among themselves about what the ideal type of religion is.

Such understandings of religion are, however, anathema to practitioners of the academic discipline of the study of religion. This discipline, also variously known as "religious studies," "history of religions," *Religionswissenschaft* (and so on), developed in self-conscious opposition to theological understandings of religion like Thwackum's. Its founding fathers wanted (and some of its practitioners still want) an understanding of religion not derived from the self-understanding of some church, without theological commitments, sufficiently subtle and interesting to permit interesting intellectual work to be done, and capable of being agreed upon by a community of scholars sufficiently large to make possible the development of a discipline with religion as its central topic. But no such understanding has yet been found: Parson Thwackum's embrace has proved difficult to escape. A little history will show why.

The Latin word *religio*, from which we get "religion," was not an especially important term for pre-Christian thinkers who used that language; and there is no single Greek word for which it is the obvious translation. This lack of importance is reflected, too, in early Christian literature. Jerome's fourth-century Latin version of the New Testament, for instance—the version that, with some revisions, was the standard text for Western Christians for a thousand years—uses *religio* and its derivatives only six times, and to render a number of different Greek words. The word is simply not an important part of the biblical lexicon, and this is evident, too, in the decisions made by early translators of the Bible into English. The King James Version (1611), for instance, uses "religion" or "religious" only five times in its rendering of the New Testament from Greek, and for three different Greek terms (not always the same ones that Jerome chose to render with *religio*).

The term is, of course, sometimes used by Christians in late antiquity. Augustine, for instance, gave detailed attention to it at the end of the fourth century in his work *De vera religione* (On True Religion), and occasionally elsewhere in his work. For him, *religio* meant worship, those patterns of action by which, in public, we self-consciously turn ourselves toward God in homage and praise. There could, he thought, be a right and proper ("true") way of worshiping God, just as there could be improper and damnable ("false") ways of doing so; and so there could be a true and many false "religions." Since Augustine was a Catholic Christian, he also thought that Christian worship was, on the whole, identical with true religion; and that, although true religion (proper public and communal worship) was not found only within the bounds of the Christian church, it was found preeminently and most perfectly there.

This equation of religion with public and communal worship was not unique to Augustine. It was almost standard in the pre-Christian Mediterranean world, and it became the ordinary understanding of *religio* among those Christians of late antiquity who thought and wrote in Latin. This understanding of the word is evident, too, in the etymology of *religio* most commonly given by Latin-using intellectuals (Christian and otherwise) in late antiquity. This etymology derives *religio* from *re* + *ligare*, "to bind back," or "to re-bind," meaning to reestablish by worship a lost or broken intimacy between God and worshipers. (There are other etymologies of what Walker Percy calls this "peculiar word" defended by a minority both ancient and modern, the most interesting of which derives *religio* from *re* + *legere*, "to re-read"; but this etymology has entered less deeply into the soul of the West.)

It is important to notice, too, that Western Christians from the fourth century onward, after Constantine's Edict of 313 had made Christianity the mode of worship and theological thought favored by the state, had little occasion to think or write about those things that we now usually call "religions." Islam did not come into existence until the seventh century, and until the Renaissance was most often thought of by Christians as a Christian heresy rather than a non-Christian religion: this is how John of Damascus, the first Christian to give it serious attention, categorized it. The religions of India, China, Japan, Africa, and America were effectively unknown until the sixteenth century; and Judaism, in spite of the many lively Jewish communities in Europe, was a topic of interest to Christians largely as a precursor to Christianity, a *praeparatio evangelica*. And so Christianity was rarely, if ever, thought of by Christians as one religion among

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many: the idea that there is a genus called "religion" of which there are many species did not gain much currency until the seventeenth century. It is, by and large, a modern invention.

Insofar as there was a standard use of *religio* in Europe between the effective end of Roman hegemony in the fifth century and the cataclysm of the Reformation in the sixteenth, it was to denote the activities and members of the monastic orders. These were typically called religious orders, and their members were simply the religious. This usage has survived, in somewhat attenuated form, in the Catholic Church, where it is common to hear people speak of "the religious life" and mean by it life within a religious order.

Modern (post-Reformation) understandings of religion differ from these premodern uses most dramatically in that they see religion exactly as a genus of which there are many species. One influence upon the acceptance of this idea was the pressing necessity in the seventeenth century of creating political forms of life in Europe that could peacefully accommodate a wide variety of Christian groups with incompatible understandings of what it is to be a Christian, and often with a deep hatred of one another. After the Thirty Years' War in Europe (1618-1648) and the Civil War in England (1642-1648), in which such differences showed themselves clearly in large-scale and long-lived violence, it was clear that the political forms which had served Europe fairly well for the preceding millennium would no longer do, and that any new ones would have to find a way of dealing with the violent splintering of Christendom brought about by the Reformation.

The political solutions that emerged were of two kinds. The first affirmed the idea that a sovereign state could and should accommodate only one Christian group, and that your religion (now it began commonly to be called that) should therefore be determined by geography, by where you happened to live. Calvin's Geneva provides one instance of this solution, as does the English settlement of 1688; both use the idea that there are many religions, and that the state should establish and give special privileges to one among them. The second kind of political resolution used the idea that the state should be neutral with respect to religion (which usually meant neutral with respect to the various brands of Protestant Christianity; Jews and Catholics were usually beyond the pale, and Buddhists and Muslims did not enter into consideration). The passage of the First Amendment to the American Constitution in 1791 provides a paradigm here. This second kind of political resolution, like the first, required (usually in very explicit terms) the view that religion is a genus with many species—although the understanding of "religion" in play was always entirely Thwackum-like. "Religion" always referred to one or another form of Protestant Christianity as its ideal type.

Almost equally important to this new understanding of "religion" was the vast increase in European knowledge of the history, languages, and practices of non-European civilizations. Beginning in the fifteenth century (and increasing almost exponentially in the sixteenth and seventeenth) reports of the habits and practices of the Indians, the Chinese, the Japanese, and the inhabitants of Meso-America began to be available to the literati of Europe. The earliest among these reports were written by Catholic missionaries for the use of the Church in its efforts to propagate itself; but these were soon followed by work sponsored by the European states with interests in empire-building, first the Portuguese, Spanish, and Dutch, and later the English and French. By the seventeenth century, grammars and lexicons of hitherto exotic and unknown languages (Sanskrit, Chinese) began to become available, and throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries works in these languages were translated in ever-increasing numbers into those of Europe.

Much of the information gathered in these ways seemed to European intellectuals, Christian and otherwise, to reveal forms of life and patterns of belief both deeply like and importantly unlike Christian forms and patterns. The Indians wrote hymns and prayers to many gods, and seemed to worship images and statues of them; the Chinese had temples, canonical works, and a highly developed ritual system; and so on. It began to seem natural to European historians, philosophers, and theologians to think of these forms of life as the religions of India and China, and also to think of Christianity as the religion of Europe. It was then not difficult to move to the more abstract theoretical view that there is a genus called religion of which there are many species; and this was effectively the standard position by the eighteenth century.

Over these intellectual moves, too, Parson Thwackum's spirit hovers: "religion" means "things like Christianity." The likeness often became quite strained, but the controlling power of the paradigm case can be seen clearly in the endless nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century debates about whether such things as Buddhism (no God?) or State Shinto (the Japanese Emperor as God and no theology?) are really religions—for they aren't really very much like Christianity. Even in the analyses of religion offered by such resolutely anti-Christian figures as David Hume (in *The Natural History of Religion*, first published in 1757), or by such quasi-Christian thinkers as Immanuel Kant

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(in *Religion Within the Bounds of Reason Alone*, 1793) and G. W. F. Hegel (in *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*, first delivered in 1821), "religion" is analyzed by a process of abstraction from features of Protestant Christianity.

This history, sketchy though it is, should help to explain why scholars of religion who don't find Parson Thwackum appealing as a founding father have found it so difficult to construct an idea of religion that will meet the needs mentioned above. The historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith puts the matter very clearly in an essay published in 1998: "'Religion,'" he writes, "is not a native term; it is a term created by scholars for their intellectual purposes and therefore is theirs to define. It is a second-order generic concept that plays the same role in establishing a disciplinary horizon that a concept such as 'language' plays in linguistics or 'culture' plays in anthropology. There can be no disciplined study of religion without such a horizon." Smith might have added, though he does not, that such a horizon is, as a matter of fact, entirely lacking.

Others do add this conclusion. There are now effectively only two camps among the anti-Thwackums about the possible scholarly uses of the category of religion. The first argues that the attempt to find a nontheological understanding of religion around which a scholarly discipline can be constructed has failed, and that as a result the category ought to be dropped. On this view, work hitherto done under the religion umbrella ought to disperse quietly (but quickly) in search of new shelter under other academic umbrellas. History, literary studies, anthropology (a discipline with its own deep identity problems), and cultural studies are the usual suggestions. This is the avant-garde position; it amounts to a concession that Thwackum was right, and a concomitant agreement that if thinking from within a theological perspective is to be abandoned (as this camp would wish), use of the category "religion" must go with it. The other camp, fighting a desperate defensive action and struggling not to appear quaintly positivist, argues that a scientific (nontheological) understanding of religion can still be productively used, and that in order to do so the avant garde must be fended off on the eastern front, as it were, while the advance of the theologians is blocked to the west. Two recent books illustrate the divide very nicely.

The first is Timothy Fitzgerald's *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford University Press). Fitzgerald is Associate Professor in the Department of International Culture of Aichi Gakuin University in Japan. He has worked also in Maharashtra, India, and appears to have lived in both England and the United States (clues dropped at various points in the book suggest that he may be English by birth and education). His book has two central purposes. The first is to show, historically, that those who have tried to develop a scientific understanding of religion capable of providing the necessary horizon for the discipline have failed to do so. The second is to show that when the category of religion is used in contemporary (nontheological) scholarship, it has no analytical uses and confuses rather than illuminates what is studied.

The book largely succeeds in both these purposes. The analysis of the work of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century founding fathers of *Religionswissenschaft* (Max Mueller, P. D. Chantepie de la Saussaye, Gerardus Van der Leeuw, Joachim Wach, Mircea Eliade), though brief, is convincing in its claim that the understandings of religion developed by all of them were informed by theological premises and goals. Fitzgerald does not mean by this that each of them was thinking explicitly about religion as Parson Thwackum did; neither does he mean that they were all Christians (or Jews). He means, rather (and rightly), that they assumed, sometimes implicitly and sometimes explicitly, "that a transcendental ontology provided the universal reference point . . . for all those forms of life that could be categorized as religious." Such an assumption, as Fitzgerald rightly says, is crypto-Christian, and thus at least implicitly theological. He doesn't say, though I wish he had, that it is vastly less interesting and less theoretically productive than openly and fully Christian assumptions.

Fitzgerald is equally convincing in his analysis of the work of more recent scholars in religious studies, such as Ninian Smart. His discussion of Smart shows that, while Smart has moved further from explicitly theological assumptions than had (for example) Van der Leeuw, they can still be found in the subtext of his work; moreover, they provide the only reasonable explanation for his unwillingness to abandon the concept of religion. The difficulties are in fact more pressing for Smart and his like. They want, as Fitzgerald shows, to preserve the idea that religion is a sui generis dimension of human experience, recognizable cross-culturally and not to be analytically reduced to other categories such as culture, economics, and power. And yet at the same time they want to deny the ontological commitments that would make sense of such an idea, most especially the commitment to "belief in a transcendent being which provides individuals with a unique and irreducible category of experience, an intelligent purpose for humankind."

Fitzgerald's view, in summary form, is that when theological assumptions about religion are jettisoned, the category ceases to be either believable (why should we think there is any such thing?) or analytically useful (there is nothing we can do with it in the

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way of explanation or prediction that we can't do better with other categories). Continuing to employ the category in the absence of theology is, for him, a form of mystification that prevents useful analytical attention to cultural, economic, and political particularities. He provides interesting analyses of the Ambedkar-inspired Buddhist movement in India, and of contemporary (so-called) religious movements in Japan, in which the mystifying effects of applying the category "religion" in the absence of theological commitments are amply demonstrated.

It is important to see that what Fitzgerald argues for is the truth of a conditional. The conditional is: if Thwackum is left behind, the category of religion must go too. He doesn't argue for the truth of the antecedent, which is that Thwackum should be left behind. In spite of his occasional protestations that he is not against theology, though, he would clearly rather Thwackum were left behind. It's just that his book is not concerned to argue that point. With this reservation in mind, then, I suggest that theologians, whether Christian, Jewish, or Islamic, ought to give their support to Fitzgerald's argument. It affirms, after all, only what theologians ought already to think, which is that an attempt to make sense and use of an idea of religion that systematically rejects theological assumptions will fail. It is heartening to see that at least some of those formed by the attempt to find a non-Thwackum-like understanding of religion are beginning, at last, to see that this is true.

Some, however, are not yet convinced. There are still some in the camp of those who think that a coherent and useful scientific (nontheological) concept of religion can be saved. Among the most vociferous of them is Donald Wiebe, whose book *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy* (St. Martin's) gives this line of reasoning as good a defense as it is likely to get. The book contains revisions of essays by Wiebe (who is Professor of the Philosophy of Religion and Dean of the Faculty of Divinity at Trinity College, Toronto) published at various times between 1986 and 1997. In the Preface to the book he says: "Taken together, therefore, these essays constitute a much-needed book that advocates recovery of the scientific agenda in the academic study of religion, on which basis it achieved cognitive legitimation." An author who describes his own book as "much-needed" offends at least against good taste, and the book is saturated throughout with the author's sense of his own importance. The book does however have the virtue of clarity, a virtue given to it in part by the endless repetition of its central claim.

This central claim is that the academic study of religion both can and ought to be understood as a science, which is to say that its only goals are understanding and explanation. Theology, by contrast, understood generically as "any kind of confessional or religious orientation," cannot be scientific in this sense precisely because it attempts more than understanding and explanation: it includes involvement in the object of study, much as a political activist cannot be scientific in his approach to politics because he intends more than understanding and explanation. The (public) university, furthermore, is the proper place for the scientific study of religion, because the university is interested only in science and has no place for theology.

Wiebe is concerned throughout with what he sees as theology's continuing tendency to corrupt the pure science of religion. The chief defense, he suggests, ought to be the adoption of naturalism (not defined, but certainly taken to rule out appeal to or use of God as an explanation of anything), which is a way of viewing the world "implicit in a scientific methodology." Science, naturalism, and the public university therefore belong inextricably together in Wiebe's thought, and this explains his passionate objection to the intrusion of theology upon the hallowed ground of the public university. The ramparts must be high and well defended if the public university is not to become fouled by the impurities of theology. This is stronger language than any Wiebe uses, but not by much: his work is informed by passions at least as deep as those that produce *odium theologicum*, and it is one of the interesting paradoxes of the book that a resolutely naturalistic position is assumed in terms that suggest a commitment of faith to it. Another is that the position is argued by a Dean of Divinity. What this means for the current state of theological thinking at Trinity College can only be imagined.

The book's argument, then, is profoundly anti-Thwackum. Oddly, though, there is almost no serious engagement with perspectives such as Fitzgerald's. Wiebe scarcely acknowledges that there are many, probably now a majority, among those who reject theological understandings of religion who also take the next step and reject the category altogether. These are not his opponents; he is concerned only with the theologians, but this fact drastically limits the usefulness of his book since it doesn't permit engagement with the more interesting nontheological theorists of religion currently working. It also gives his work a deeply old-fashioned, even quaint air, and it means that he makes no attempt to show what can be done, intellectually speaking, with the scientific concept of religion he advocates. The challenge of work like Fitzgerald's is, as a result, not met. But this is not the only nor even the most important difficulty.

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A deeper problem is that Wiebe understands the public university to be capable of accommodating only those who adopt naturalism as the frame for their work. But why think this? Wiebe's reasons appear to be historical. He seems to think that the public university in the United States, because it has roots in the German research universities of the nineteenth century, just *is* the kind of place in which naturalism is the frame for all intellectual work. If this is his view, it carries no implication as to the truth or falsehood of naturalism. The bowling alley, because of its history and design, is the place where you go to bowl; you don't play tennis there, but this has nothing to say about the desirability or otherwise of playing tennis. If this is Wiebe's view (and the book reads as though it is), then it is deeply inadequate. There are lots of non- and anti-naturalists working in public universities, and there have been for a long time. The question of whether naturalism (as Wiebe appears to understand it) is true has, for example, exercised philosophers working in such universities for several generations at least, and continues to do so. Were commitment to naturalism an entrance requirement, a kind of quasi-religious test, this would not be the case. I hope that Wiebe does not mean to imply that all those who take naturalism to be false should be purged from our public universities. If he does, then he has a deeply impoverished understanding of what a university, public or otherwise, is; he does not, for example, see that it may also be a place in which those with deeply different philosophical commitments may work with (and against) one another in mutually productive and interesting ways.

The other possibility on this matter is that Wiebe wishes to cleanse the universities of the anti-naturalists because he thinks naturalism is true. But he offers no reasons for thinking it true; and, more damagingly still, no reasons for thinking that judging someone's views to be false is a sufficient reason for excluding them from the public university. And so he provides no remotely convincing arguments for his view that the study of religion in public universities should proceed as if naturalism were true. Neither does he seem to see that his own uncritical presentation of naturalism as though it were obviously true, or obviously to be adhered to by students of religion in a public university, makes it seem formally and functionally indistinguishable from the confessional commitments he excoriates—though it is of course substantively much less interesting than they.

Parson Thwackum, then, has not been escaped. Those, like Wiebe, who have tried the hardest to escape him have not managed to constitute a discipline because they have not managed to construct what Jonathan Smith so clearly sees the need for: a horizon within which intellectual work can be done. Others, clearer-sighted, see that the idea of religion is so deeply intertwined with a theological and specifically Christian response to modernity that attempts to disentangle it by abstraction will produce a cipher; they therefore recommend its abandonment by those who cannot or will not adopt a theological frame for their work. These are the only two possible options for those who want to renounce theology, and that this is so shows that the scientific study of religion is without a future. This is no news, of course. What is new is that more and more of those who find their academic home in departments of religion and their principal guild affiliation in the American Academy of Religion are happy to say it.

A final question remains. Is there an intellectual future for the idea of religion among those who are happy to return Parson Thwackum's embrace? Is there, that is to say, an intellectually productive Christian (or Jewish, or Islamic, or Buddhist) use of the term? Can it become native to these traditions of reasoning and practice? I suspect that, in the Christian case, it can; but arguing that position is for another occasion. FT

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Leading Children Beyond Good and Evil

James Davison Hunter

Perhaps the enduring subtext in the evolution of moral education in America, and its continuing story to the present, has been a quest for inclusiveness. While the need to provide moral instruction to young people has never been questioned, neither has the impulse to accommodate the ever-growing diversity of moral cultures. In the face of potentially contentious and disrupting cultural differences, theorists and practitioners adopted inclusive accommodation as a strategy to neutralize the likelihood of conflict, since when put into practice, cultural inclusion means that no one's interests are neglected, no one is left out, and, therefore, no one is slighted, snubbed, or offended. William Glasser captured the sum and substance of the quest for our own day as early as 1969 when he stated that "certain moral values can be taught in school *if the teaching is restricted to principles about which there is essentially no disagreement in our society*" (emphasis added).

This has become the unspoken imperative of every school of moral education—psychological, neoclassical, and communitarian. Psychologists interested in the question believe that there is a set of universal dispositions toward justice and other virtues that is innate in every person, at all times and in all cultures, and which proper education can bring out during the formative stages of childhood development. Communitarian and neoclassical moral educators would also point to a universal set of moral virtues and values shared throughout this society and even the world, though they might have slightly different lists (communitarians favor the civic virtues of democratic liberalism, while neoclassical thinkers such as C. S. Lewis and William Bennett favor personal virtues), and they are likely to explain the universal morality in terms of culture rather than innate traits. But every major school of educational theory when reflecting on public moral education agrees that there is a universal and all-inclusive morality.

This consensus in theory is repeated by the large host of educators charged with translating the theories into practice. For instance, William Honig, the former state superintendent of schools in California, insisted that teachers instruct children in the common ethical convictions of the American people, "the ideals and standards we as a society hold to be worthy of praise and emulation." The Character Counts! Coalition also insists that "there are some universal core values that can be taught—values that are not identified with any single political or religious tradition."

How are these values to be identified? In a survey of such efforts, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that "to decide what to teach, state education boards generally round up diverse professionals—who arrive at an acceptable list of values to be taught. Respect, responsibility, compassion, honesty, and civic participation usually head the list." Educators insist, according to E. Dale David, that "a list of civic values consciously chosen by a school system to realize the goal of developing effective citizens is the necessary first step in

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the teaching of civic values."

In actual communities around the country, the pursuit of "consensus values" has become an undertaking of some urgency. In 1984, the 148 public schools in Baltimore County, Maryland, agreed to teach a common core of twenty-four values including compassion, courtesy, critical inquiry, due process, equality of opportunity, freedom of thought and action, honesty, human worth and dignity, integrity, justice, knowledge, loyalty, objectivity, order, patriotism, rational consent, reasoned argument, respect for others' rights, responsible citizenship, rule of law, self-respect, tolerance, and truth. Nashville, Tennessee, generated a curriculum covering eighteen "universal virtues" including respect for self, doing what is right, service, respecting others, accepting responsibility, building community, caring, nurturing family and friends, loving learning, taking initiative, modeling democracy, forgiveness, practicing honesty, perseverance, gratitude, courage, solving problems, and respecting work. The Department of Education in New Jersey likewise endorsed a set of core values to be taught in schools, including civic responsibility and respect for oneself and others. A thirty-two member task force in Raleigh, North Carolina, produced a list of eight consensus values. In Howard County, Maryland, a school board approved eighteen values for promotion in schools. It was this sense of need for consensus values that motivated the Character Counts! Coalition to seek broad endorsement of its "Six Core Elements of Character."

The mandate to discover and cultivate "consensus values" has extended to law and public policy as well. Legislatures in Virginia, Alabama, New Hampshire, Georgia, Iowa, Indiana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Oregon, Kentucky, and Utah have created or reaffirmed laws that mandate the teaching of commonly held values in their school districts.

In theory and practice, in law and in administrative policies, the quest for an inclusive morality that transcends differences is common to all moral education strategies. As noted above, all strategies—psychological, neoclassical, and communitarian—pursue it. Their advocates all agree with William Bennett that "values can and should be taught in schools without fear of accusations of proselytizing."

And there's the rub. Underlying all of these efforts is the basic fear of "violating historic traditions of secular education" or "lapsing into dogmatic indoctrination." Virginia's statute mandating character education, for example, insists that the law not "be construed as requiring or authorizing indoctrination in any particular religious or political belief." The sensitivity educators have to being accused of "indoctrination" is only partly rooted in a respect for the First Amendment's religion clause. They are no less fearful of violating the imperative to be inclusive. To recognize the differences among different moral communities and take them seriously in moral education is to enter a pluralistic quagmire in which disagreements arise, one's impartiality is challenged, and feelings are hurt. So for understandable reasons, educators retreat from the hard and dicey work of acknowledging and working with these differences.

An inclusive morality, then, is a "safe" morality. To proclaim certain moral norms to be universal—whether because they are rooted in the psychological predispositions of the human person, the anthropological constitution of all human civilizations, or the social contract of a human community—means that these norms are not controversial and will not be contested. The very volatile realm of life we call morality has thus been tamed. And so it is that inclusiveness is the sacred wood of all moral education.

Yet while this imperative is apparently beyond dispute, it is not without cost.

The quest for inclusiveness in moral education can be pursued only by emptying lived morality of its particularity—those "thick" normative meanings whose seriousness and authority are embedded within the social organization of distinct communities and the collective rituals and narratives that give them continuity over time. The net effect of this denial of particularity is to engage in some extraordinary evasions.

Consider, for example, the treatment of moral exemplars in the psychological strategy. Though Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive developmentalism is unique in that field, his treatment of Martin Luther King, Jr. is typical. King is enshrined as the personification of a "just" human being. In Kohlberg's model, he exemplified "stage six" moral reasoning: autonomous, conscience-oriented morality pointing toward universal principles of justice. Kohlberg acts as though King's race, southern heritage, generational moment, Christian faith, and theological training—all the inconvenient particularities that bore on his leadership in the civil rights movement—were utterly incidental to his vision and his moral courage. They are simply disregarded.

Though the circumstances and issues are different, it is certainly out of the same desire to evade the sticky problem of particularity that the psychological pedagogies avoid addressing the issues of abortion, gender, homosexuality, and the like. These moral matters simply cannot be addressed without getting into the particularities of moral commitment and the traditions and communities that ground those commitments. Knowledge of the cognitive and affective dimensions of moral agency just doesn't provide the

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resources to address these matters. And so, for all practical purposes, these issues have been defined out of existence in this framework of moral education.

The neoclassical strategy denies particularity as well, but in its own way. In principle, differences of philosophical and religious tradition should be of paramount importance in this strategy, but in practice these differences are glossed over. Its advocates completely ignore the often intense disagreements between Plato and Aristotle, Kant and Mill, Jefferson and Adams, Falwell and John Paul II (and the communities for whom these are merely representatives), and no effort is made to discern the ways to sort through these differences. Of course, where these differences remain, they often do so only as fragments of more full-bodied social and moral systems. Thus when its advocates champion the "Judeo-Christian ethic"—or what C. S. Lewis called "the Tao" (the morality common to all cultures)—they champion an ethic that never existed in reality and now exists only as an ethical abstraction or political slogan.

Communitarians also diminish particularity with the same effect. In principle, of course, an appreciation of the concrete social and normative composition of communities would seem to be essential to any adequate theory of community. In practice, these constitutive elements tend to be downplayed. The reason for this may be that the most influential school of communitarianism—that associated with the journal *The Responsive Community*, edited by Amitai Etzioni—tends to equate its ideal of community with the liberal welfare state. In its political structures one finds the embodiment of the common good, and in its polity of equality and redistributive justice one finds the ideal of civic life. Here, after all, is a manifestation of political consensus that permits the feeling of rootedness and connectedness but avoids most of the unpleasant realities that accompany "thick" associations.

In a politicized understanding of community, particular communities—whether rooted in "lifestyle" or religion—tend to be given short shrift. Particular communities, of course, are often provincial, exclusive, and messy, almost always in some ways restrictive of individual freedom. The kinds of obligations binding together creedal communities, for example, make many Americans and most communitarians nervous, and so they are written off as "puritanical," authoritarian, and extreme. Reluctant to affirm those features of actual communities that often challenge received notions of liberal autonomy, many American communitarians find it easier to embrace a political ideal of community that poses no such challenge. Thus community is championed more in theory than in reality, more as an ideal of liberal universalism than as the diverse relational structures that impose themselves upon us in everyday life.

The denial of particularity extends as well to the way moral educators respond to the "why" questions behind moral agency, the principles that undergird moral action. Why should one be good? Why should one tell the truth rather than lie? Why should one shun cruelty in favor of compassion? Why should one pursue fairness for others when one's own interests are not served? Why should one care for those in need when everyone else around is indifferent? These are natural questions to ask, and not just for children. They point to the deep, long-standing questions at the foundations of moral philosophy.

In 1951, the educational establishment recognized that these "why" questions are "of primary importance." "Children and young people," the National Education Association declared in *Moral and Spiritual Values in the Public Schools*,

> sometimes annoyingly, want to know *why*. They do not readily believe, or trust, or act upon, the instruction of those who tell them that [there] is no reason at all for preferring one kind of conduct over another, or that any reason at all will do equally well. Nor, if it were pedagogically effective, could the doctrine of "never-mind-why" be acceptable to any but an authoritarian state or a dictatorial school system. On neither pedagogical nor on ideological grounds can the schools ignore the problem of sanctions.

Whether or not this view was widely held at midcentury, it is certainly not taken seriously today. For the most part, moral educators want to believe that the virtues are self-evident goods that need no justification. As Michael Josephson of Character Counts! put it, "I suggest that it doesn't really matter how we answer the question. No one seriously questions the virtue of virtues or doubts that honesty is better than dishonesty, fairness is better than unfairness, kindness is better than cruelty, and moral courage is superior to cowardice and expediency." He suggests that the challenge implicit in the "Why be ethical?" question "may arise more from a need to find an excuse for moral shortcomings than from a genuine desire to satisfy philosophical curiosity."

In the rare instances when moral educators address the theoretical question, their answers are consistent with the model of inclusiveness they advocate. The psychologically oriented moral educator argues that moral virtue is an intrinsic need, and when we satisfy this need by being kind or compassionate, we feel

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good about ourselves. The neoclassical educator will appeal to the consensus of history or anthropology and say that it is "natural" for us to conform to these standards. The communitarian educator will point to the social contract and say that we are better off when we share in the will of the people. All these responses are as generalized as the morality they espouse. The aim is to offend no one and satisfy as many as possible.

At least as often, we are told that arguments for morality are unproductive and therefore unnecessary. One textbook in the 1970s put it this way: "When controversial issues or values choices are discussed, some questions are to be avoided. . . . 'Why' questions, while sometimes justified, risk pushing students who have no clear reasons for their choices into fabricating a reason." Established opinion has not changed since then. As Rheta DeVries and Betty Zan explained more recently in *Moral Classrooms, Moral Children* (1994), "The child (and often the adult as well) is unlikely to have any idea about why he or she feels or behaves in a certain manner. Thus, we suggest that it is ineffective to ask the child, 'Why do you do this?'"

The historical and empirical problem is that the reasons "why one should be good" are many. Their stubborn plurality signals just the kinds of irreducible differences that cannot be homogenized into an encompassing morality. In response to the question "Why be good?" or "Why not be cruel?" a commitment to inclusiveness limits one to awkward silence.

In sum, an inclusive moral education does not result in the absence of morality, but rather a morality emptied of meaning, significance, authority. The effort to be inclusive reduces morality to the thinnest of platitudes, severed from the social, historical, and cultural contexts that make it concrete and ultimately compelling. Virtues are presented as ungrounded generalities that can be found in various social organizations and cultural traditions but are essentially independent of them. Without being anchored in any normative community, this morality retains little authority beyond its own aesthetic appeal.

As a result, the very vocabulary of right and wrong, good and bad, justice and injustice becomes, for all practical purposes, obsolete, because these words share fewer and fewer points of reference. Neologisms from the moral education establishment like "prosocial" are only the most overt and self-conscious attempts to avoid the awkwardness of words like "good" and "evil." The words central to our moral frame of reference have lost much of their power to make sense of experience, while at the same time, by inventing a new vocabulary, the moral education establishment literally creates a new way of seeing reality. We end up with an epistemology and moral vocabulary that is effectively beyond good and evil.

Consider, for example, the word "character." Within professional psychology and the therapeutic establishment, the concept of character was long ago rejected in favor of the concept of personality. The problem with "character" was that it bore ethical and metaphysical implications that professional psychology could not rationally explain or justify. Character, after all, is either good or bad, whereas personality is fascinating or boring, forceful or weak, attractive or unattractive. When character was disqualified as a legitimate way of thinking about the person, our concept of the self lost a measure of moral significance. The neoclassical and communitarian moral theorists define themselves in principled opposition to the psychological regime on just this point. But because they too insist on moral inclusivity—considering the individual person generically, either prior to or apart from his community and culture—they also undermine the metaphysical, ethical, and social particularities that ground the self and make it specific. The unwitting effect is to position moral agency within a social, historical, and cultural vacuum. The individual is left with few other resources than his or her mind and emotions, the moral justification for various actions.

There have never been "generic" values, though this is what contemporary moral education strives to teach. But is this really a problem? Why should we worry about the specifics—especially since we are so likely to disagree on them—as long as we are united around the overall norms?

Charles Taylor, who posed this question in his book *The Sources of the Self,* has suggested that it is the particularities that lead us to the sources of morality, the sources that sustain our commitment to goodness and fair play. It is one thing to affirm general standards of goodness, he says, and quite another to be motivated by a strong understanding "that human beings are eminently *worth* helping or treating with justice." High ethical standards, Taylor argues, require strong sources. Without them, there is little imperative and no direction for moral action.

Take empathy as an example. For many moral educators, it is our capacity to imagine ourselves in the situation of others that is the source of our moral sentiments. Empathy thus becomes the foundation of an ethical life. And it is through our capacity to imagine the suffering of others, even those in circumstances that are utterly alien to us, that we learn compassion and mercy.

The argument cannot and should not be dismissed. Empathy indeed serves as an aid to understanding and a motive to enacting justice. But when it is decontextualized—lifted out of the framework of embedded

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habits and moral traditions—empathy can become indiscriminate. Detached from the concrete habits and ideals that ground particular moral communities, empathy would not enable a person to discriminate among competing kinds of suffering. With whom do we stand in solidarity, offering our energy and resources? Somalian refugees? Upper-middle-class women who are victims of workplace discrimination? Spotted owls in endangered habitats? Gun owners who fear their rights are threatened? Holocaust survivors? In an age saturated with media accounts of tragedy and suffering, we have many stories that produce a fleeting emotion, but few that evoke anything more lasting. Empathy on its own simply does not lead to consistent, enduring, or discriminating moral commitments. Indeed, it can lead to just the opposite. As Bernard Williams observed, "If it is a mark of a man to have a conceptualized and fully conscious awareness of himself as one among others, aware that others have feelings like himself, this is a precondition not only of benevolence but (as Nietzsche pointed out) of cruelty as well."

When moral rules and selves are abstracted from the normative traditions that give them substance and the social contexts that makes them concrete, "values" become little more than sentiments, moral judgments, expressions of individual preference. In such a framework, the defining moral action is the capacity of the individual to choose as he or she sees fit. The individual is capable of making commitments, of course, but these commitments are not binding, since one always retains the right of withdrawal. The highest normative ideal, trumping all others, is the ideal of an individual free to move among multiple attachments, and the merit of those attachments is measured by the degree to which they facilitate personal well-being. Unanchored as they are to anything concrete outside the self, the values and virtues encouraged by the leading strategies of moral education provide meager resources at best for sustaining and supporting our far-reaching moral commitments to benevolence and justice.

When moral discourse is taken out of the particularity of the moral community—the social networks and rituals that define its practice, the weltanschaung that gives it significance and coherence, and the communal narrative that forms its memory—both the self and the morality it seeks to inculcate operate in a void. Filling the void, in part, is a system of rules, laws, procedures, and entitlements designed to ensure due process among individuals and groups who are assumed to be maximizing their interests. Myriad good intentions stand behind each federal and state regulation and behind each court order. But here too there are unintended consequences. In such an environment, the very idea of "developing values," "cultivating character," or generating "good" human beings is difficult to imagine, much less realize.

It is worth stepping back for a moment to consider briefly the larger cultural context within which the vagaries of contemporary moral education are worked out. The structure and content of moral education, after all, have not emerged out of thin air. My contention here is that in ways that are certainly unintended, the dominant strategies of moral education today both exemplify and carry forward the distinctive elements of Romantic modernism.

Romantic modernism is a complex phenomenon—a philosophy, an aesthetic, an ethic, and even a mythic ideal all at the same time. Its roots trace to certain streams of Enlightenment thought, and throughout the nineteenth century it found expression in such wide-ranging movements as Transcendentalism, Abstract Impressionism, and the literature of Arnold, Whitman, Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, Hawthorne, and Melville. In the twentieth century, the same impulse has found a voice in liberal religious thought, the Beat movement, and humanistic psychotherapy.

In their most basic contours, the philosophy and literature of Romantic modernism derived from traditional theology. The movement sought to sustain the inherited cultural order of Christianity but without its dogmatic understructure. The problem, of course, was that orthodox theology was no longer tenable in an age dominated by speculative rationality and progressive humanism. Among the urban, well-educated classes, traditional dogma and its assorted pieties had to be abandoned. Yet the moral ideals that Christendom had bequeathed to the late eighteenth and nineteenth century—ideals such as benevolence, civility, and justice—all retained a deep existential relevance. The task, then, was to reconstitute moral philosophy to make it intellectually acceptable as well as emotionally and spiritually fitting to the times. To do this, the traditional Christian narrative and its central concepts were demythologized and reconceived.

Particularly in the nineteenth century, Romanticism evolved into a Neoplatonized Christianity in which all of the core concepts of biblical theology were transformed into ethical universals. God "the Father" was displaced by a notion of an impersonal first principle—variously understood as "mind" or "spirit." Divine perfection was equated with the notion of a natural, self-sufficient, and undifferentiated unity in the cosmos. Likewise, traditional concepts of evil, represented by rebellion against a holy deity, were transmogrified into notions of a "division" and "estrangement." In this, Romantic modernists did not so much discard the old

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myths as translate them into the conceptual framework of an agnostic and intuitive humanism.

At the heart of this reconstitution of theology and moral philosophy was an attempt to relocate the source of moral value and significance. The earliest streams of Romantic modernism found this source in a high view of Nature, with the person as part of the natural order. Traditional theological conceptions of human nature were turned inside out: each self was a "portal of the divine," a natural repository of inborn qualities, capacities, and talents, not least of which was a disposition toward good will, kindheartedness, fair play, and so on. Since Nature was unquestionably good, so was human nature—no Fall here. But for all the Romantics' efforts to establish metaphysical grounds for this view, they could never move significantly beyond a persistent subjectivism. The early Romantics eventually abandoned their metaphysical aspirations and concluded instead that the only conceivable source of value and purpose was the autonomous self. "Nature" and any other deity man professed were projections of human values rather than their source.

It was precisely because the self was the locus of values that the Romantics believed a person could read a work of literature or encounter a work of art and recognize its moral and aesthetic significance. The good inherent in the work was validated internally through qualities the observer or reader naturally possessed. The same could be said for the ethical significance of history. It too would be validated by intrinsic structures of morality latent within the person. To cultivate good in the world it was only necessary to encourage inborn dispositions and capabilities into their full development.

This imperative—to draw out the latent potentialities innate to the self—has been and remains central to the moral cosmology of Romantic modernism. It is from this imperative that its ethic of self-actualization derives. This imperative also defined the terms through which Romantic modernists leveled their critique of the contemporary world. Given their assumptions, the essence of their critique is not surprising. If the authentic self is defined largely through its autonomy from the collective standards of social propriety and aesthetic judgment, then conformity to collective expectations is a sign of the self's distortion and even corruption. In principle, anything that repressed emotion, constricted individual autonomy, or violated the individual's expressive freedom undermined the development of the self's natural endowments and capabilities.

Dominated as it is by the impersonal forces of bureaucratic rationality, contemporary society is especially given to the repression of personal needs and interests. The goal, then, would be to liberate the individual from all constraints. Institutions still exist, of course, but their legitimacy now depends upon their capacity to accommodate the expressive needs of the individual. With this reorientation, not only would people be restored but society itself would be renewed in the process. In this, the ethical reconstitution of traditional moral theology in Romantic modernism is complete: because human beings are defined by their capacity to create a meaningful world, it is human beings who must, in the end, redeem that world.

Even in its diversity and conflict, contemporary moral education bears more than a passing resemblance to this cosmology of Romantic modernism. In the case of the dominant psychological approach to moral education, the fit is nearly perfect. The psychological strategy fully shares its optimistic assumptions about the inherent benevolence abiding in all people, the moral significance of the individual's expressive needs, the absolute moral priority of the unhindered and unencumbered individual over the exigencies of the group, as well as its antipathy toward social convention and traditional institutions. Whether or not its proponents are aware of it, the psychological strategy of moral education faithfully translates the assumptions and ideals of Romantic modernism into its theoretical literature and practical pedagogy.

Though there are clear points of resistance, the neoclassical and communitarian strategies share affinities with Romantic modernism as well. In practice, as we have seen, they offer no real alternative but instead operate with many of the same assumptions and techniques as the psychological model. Yet in principle there are significant differences between the neoclassical and communitarian strategies and the dominant psychological model, especially in their view of institutions. Whether referring to the community, the family, the canon, or the "bag of virtues" that Kohlberg derided, neoclassical and communitarian educators all accord these traditional institutions and influences much greater legitimacy and authority in the moral development of children. In principle they would want to bring young people into conformity with their standards.

But even if their principled embrace of objective values and strong institutions were realized in practice, it would be incapacitated by their unqualified commitment to inclusiveness. In their rejection of particularity, they end up advocating a morality of abstract universals, a Neoplatonic morality disengaged from history, culture, and society.

Once again, we see that the different strategies of moral education do not so much offer distinct

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options of moral instruction as emphasize different themes within the same broad moral philosophy. The dominant stream, however, tends toward an antimetaphysical perspective, viewing the self as the autonomous source of order, beauty, and virtue unsupported by any social or cosmic order.

Seeing moral education in this larger cultural context brings at least two ironies into relief. The first, of course, is that the subjectivism and emotivism of the psychological strategy—so pervasive in all models and institutions of moral instruction—reflects a moral cosmology that is not so universal after all. The quest for an inclusive morality has succeeded only in propagating a moral culture with its own distinctive set of prejudices and its own distinct method of indoctrination. It feels inclusive only to those who share its assumptions and moral horizons.

The final irony has to do with the role of moral education in the larger society. The purpose of moral education is to change people for the better and, in so doing, to improve the quality of life in society; individually and collectively, we are to become better people than we might otherwise be. The difficulty is that moral education, as it is presently configured and institutionalized, is utterly captive to the society in which it exists. It embodies too well the normative assumptions that have brought the social order to its present place and that continue to maintain it. It is, in so many respects, a reflection of the moral order it seeks to transcend and then transform. In this regard it is clear that moral education, even in its diversity and its oppositions, is more a story about the legitimation of American culture than it is about its transformation; as in every generation in America, the substance of moral education has reflected the central assumptions and ideals of the prevailing zeitgeist.

But surely this is not all that can be said. Implicit in the word "character" is a story. It is a story about living for a purpose that is greater than the self. Though this purpose resides deeply within, its origins are outside the self and so it beckons one forward, channeling one's passions to mostly quiet acts of devotion, heroism, sacrifice, and achievement.

These purposes, and the narrative in which they are embedded, translate character into destiny. In so doing they also establish the horizons of the moral imagination—the expanse of the good that can be envisioned. The moral excellences of character, then, are not the end toward which one strives but rather a means. At the same time, the moral disciplines within which one is habituated *are* enactments of the purposes to which one is called, embodiments of the vision to which one is committed.

The vision itself is imbued with a quality of sacredness. The standards by which one lives and the purposes to which one aspires have a coherence and an inviolability about them, but they are coherent and inviolable only when joined to a community. The narrative behind "character" integrates the self within communal purposes, binding dissimilar others to common ends. Character outside of a lived community, the entanglements of complex social relationships and their shared story, is impossible.

The nostalgia for those grand, encompassing stories is high in our day, and yet nearly everything in our culture undermines their credibility. It is not just the skepticism of intellectuals or the inadequacies of moral education but the structural and cultural realities of our society in this historical moment that make us doubt any kind of transcending narrative. There is no reversal of history or simple recovery of older virtues. American culture is defined more and more by an absence, and in that absence, we provide children with no moral horizons beyond the self and its well-being. In spite of good intentions, our best efforts lead children uncomfortably close to Nietzsche's "last men," who have little aspiration beyond "pitiable comfort."

This is not to say that we have seen the last of character or the moral qualities of which it is made. It will be found, here and there, in pockets of social life—within families and communities that still, against all odds, embody and enact a moral vision. Needless to say, it will manifest itself culturally in various and particular ways. In such settings people will not merely acquire techniques of moral improvement but rather find themselves encompassed within a story that defines their own purposes within a shared destiny, one that points toward aims that are higher and greater than themselves.

For parents and other adults the task of "saving our children" means, in large part, telling children what they are being saved for. The task of educating children means teaching them the larger designs that could give form and focus to their individual and collective aspirations, so that they come to understand not only how to be good but why. And though it is made explicit from time to time, this moral vision is communicated and reinforced mainly through the enactments of the particular lives, traditions, and institutions that constitute the living memory of our communities. FT

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The Justice in Just War

Keith J. Pavlischek

Morality and Contemporary Warfare. By James Turner Johnson. *Yale University Press. 259 pp. $25.*

The average person has every reason to approach somewhat skeptically books with titles like *Morality and Contemporary Warfare.* And one should not be supposed "anti-intellectual" if that skepticism extends, in particular, to books written by professors of religion and published by an elite academic press. All too often books and articles from the ethics and religious studies guild are morally self-referential, irrelevant to all except those in the guild, and next to worthless to policy makers who have to decide whether to go to war and soldiers who have to do the fighting.

This book, I'm happy to say, is exempt from such criticism—no surprise to those familiar with James Turner Johnson's work. The blurb on the book jacket says, "Johnson is one of our most important thinkers on the ethics of war." But that is a too modest evaluation. Johnson's scholarly contributions to our understanding of the theological and secular roots and historical development of the just war idea, his application of that tradition to contemporary problems, and his criticism of its modifications and distortions leave him without peer.

Johnson has visited this territory before: his earliest books, *Ideology, Reason, and the Limitation of War* (1975), *Just War Tradition and the Restraint of War* (1981), and *The Quest for Peace* (1987), taken together, constitute the most thorough discussion of the sources and historical development of the just war tradition. From the beginning, his work placed contemporary issues in international politics and military developments within that centuries-old tradition, without ignoring modern writers such as Reinhold Niebuhr, Paul Ramsey, and Michael Walzer. The current book continues a long-running argument with the U.S. National Council of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). In its 1983 statement *The Challenge of Peace,* the NCCB repeatedly asserted that just war doctrine begins with a presumption against war. Not so, said Johnson in *Can Modern War Be Just?* (1984), an argument against what is variously described as "just-war pacifism," "modern-war pacifism," "crypto-pacifism," or the "presumption-against-war" interpretation of the just war tradition.

The concept of just war, Johnson argues, does not begin with a "presumption against war" focused on the harm war may do, but with a presumption against *injustice* focused on the need for responsible use of force in response to wrongdoing. Force, according to the core meaning of the just war tradition, is a neutral instrument that can be good or evil depending on the use to which it is put. Indeed the set of criteria classified under *jus ad bellum*—justification for military action—does nothing else than specify the terms under which those in political power are authorized to resort to force. The presumption-against-war position of the NCCB, Johnson insists, is simply not to be found in classic just war teaching, "even in the specifically churchly theorists Augustine and Aquinas to whom Catholic just war theorists generally refer for authority." Rather, it owes its origin more to the influence of modern Catholic pacifists; a preoccupation with the particular issues posed by the threat of nuclear war; the debates over American involvement in Vietnam; an underappreciation of the state system of international relations; and an overly optimistic evaluation of the United Nations.

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The presumption-against-war position, Johnson argues, introduces a certain perverse logic into moral reflection on the use of military force, one that helps us account for the irrelevance of much academic and ecclesiastical teaching on the ethics of war. The resort to military force in just war tradition has historically come to be defined through seven moral concepts: just cause, competent authority, right intention, reasonable hope of success, last resort, the goal of peace, and overall proportionality of good over harm. However, both historically (including the writings of Augustine and Aquinas and the early-modern natural law theorists) and in terms of the inner logic of the just war idea, the criteria are not all of equal importance: just cause, competent authority, and right intention have priority. In the classical view, military force is thought of as one tool among several with which statesmen pursue political goods; each of these three guiding criteria, then, is tied to a particular political good—competent authority to the good of *order*, right intention to *peace*, just cause to *justice*. The remaining concerns are not unimportant and must be taken seriously. However, being prudential tests, they "are of a qualitatively different character from the deontological criteria" of the first three.

The presumption-against-war position inverts the priority, so that prudential criteria such as reasonable chance of success and last resort (probably the least helpful of the criteria) often are presented at the center of the tradition. Johnson calls this "a serious distortion."

Here, I think, one can locate the reason why even the antirealist should be skeptical of much of the counsel coming from academic ethicists. The idealism of the presumption-against-war position tends to undercut the very purpose of just war reflection, which, as Johnson argues, "is not properly understood as a collection of abstract moral ideals, alien to political judgments or military thinking and imposed from the outside. By its very nature, the just war approach to the ethics of the use of force is already in dialogue with the spheres of statecraft and military affairs." Just war reasoning belongs to, properly resides with, statesmen and military commanders when they consider the use of military force. If the mere *use* of military force is conceived in the first instance as the problem to which *avoidance* is the solution, then just war reasoning tends to be reduced to little more than a moralistic checklist brought in externally, as it were, to the task of statecraft.

Johnson's analysis explains, I think, the rather maddening spectacle in recent years of having theologians—including pacifists and some crypto-pacifists—who know virtually nothing of military strategy, doctrine, force structure, and capability holding forth confidently on the likely or unlikely success of a military operation, or about the preference of economic sanctions to military force. The statesmen and military experts who must make responsible moral judgments quickly dismiss such moralistic posturing. Johnson's analysis also accounts, I think, for the annoying assertion that pacifists and just warriors share a common core commitment to military force as a "last resort," the only purported difference being that pacifists believe a last resort can *never* be met (as if that were a minor difference!).

Military personnel who want to act responsibly are often frustrated by the subtle distinction between understanding the tradition as a "presumption against *injustice*" and understanding it as a "presumption against *war*." A large part of Johnson's burden is to show that the distinction matters and it matters profoundly on important issues of contemporary statecraft and modern warfighting. The distinction matters, Johnson insists, because the presumption-against-war understanding of the tradition—overly influenced as it was by problems unique to a bipolar Cold War—can provide little moral guidance for statesmen who must deal with the challenges of a post-Cold War world. This book seeks to remedy that state of affairs by bringing the classic just war analysis to bear on current debates such as the following: the use of military force for humanitarian relief across sovereign borders; the direct and intentional targeting of entire groups of noncombatants in warfare (including ethnic cleansing and genocide); the influence on conflict of major cultural differences (the "clash of civilizations" thesis); and internationally sanctioned war crimes proceedings and reconciliation after conflict.

Johnson does not buy the argument, shared by actual and putative war criminals and by many modern-war pacifists, that the very idea of noncombatancy, and hence the *jus in bello* principle of discrimination, is irrelevant either because the complex interconnected nature of modern society blurs the combatant/noncombatant distinction or because the destructiveness of modern weapons renders talk of discrimination meaningless. He thus provides a helpful study of war against refugees in the Rwandan-Zaire war and the Serbian war against cities and "safe havens" in Bosnia.

Johnson focuses on these two cases precisely because neither involved weapons that were inherently indiscriminate (mostly knives, bayonets, and bullets—and he should have added artillery in the case of Bosnia) but became indiscriminate when the combatants made the choice to use them indiscriminately. He also suggests that the modern-war pacifist's assumption that modern war and contemporary weapons are

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so inherently nondiscriminatory that traditional *jus in bello* restraints no longer apply tends to become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Most illuminating is his discussion of the strategy of siege warfare conducted by Serbian forces in Bosnia. Johnson notes that apart from a discussion in Michael Walzer's *Just and Unjust Wars*, very little has been written on the morality of siege warfare. Johnson takes up that task and, drawing on Walzer, suggests that a siege constitutes warfare against noncombatants in two cases: first, if the besieged place is surrounded on all sides such that noncombatants are deprived of the chance to leave; second, if the besiegers choose methods that affect noncombatants directly or intentionally or that are disproportionately destructive, even if they are unable to close the ring around the city. The Roman siege of Jerusalem exemplifies the first case, the siege of Sarajevo the second, and the Serbian sieges of Bosnian "safe havens" has elements of both.

In his chapter on "Conflict and Cultural Difference," Johnson tries to steer a middle course between a "realist" model of cultural conflict and Samuel Huntington's "clash of civilizations" thesis. The former does not sufficiently appreciate the cultural values and ideals that lead to specific conflicts. But the latter exaggerates the adverse effects of cultural difference and minimizes common factors, so that it fails to take into account those resources within the cultural traditions for the mitigation and avoidance of conflicts. Thus, in a most illuminating, and, I suspect, most controversial section of the chapter, Johnson takes great pains to show that there are inherent limitations on the conduct of war in Islamic culture. Jihad is war for the sake of religion, but, according to Johnson, "its religious purpose does not translate into license to fight total war against all enemies of the Muslim faith." Muslims who take their faith seriously are to observe restraints imposed by the Prophet Muhammad himself and by jurists interpreting the meaning of the Prophet's permissions and prohibitions. The position, argues Johnson, is clear: "There is no justification for war directed intentionally against noncombatants in jihad."

In his chapter "War Crimes and Reconciliation," Johnson takes note of a dilemma. On the one hand, a genuine lasting peace with justice requires that atrocities be dealt with. On the other hand, the cooperation of those responsible for atrocious conduct seems necessary for a minimal peace between the conflicting parties. This dilemma has led to two well-formed opposing constituencies on the issue of international war crimes proceedings. Those defending such proceedings tend to be international lawyers and criminal justice specialists and those involved in monitoring and enforcing compliance with international humanitarian law. Those opposed adopt a "no-fault" approach to conflict resolution, which is usually favored by the diplomatic community, conflict-resolution professionals, and non-governmental organizations engaged in providing relief and other services. Johnson's just war convictions lead him to an unequivocal position:

> As one whose professional career has focused on the development and restraints on the initiation of war and the conduct of war, and one who, moreover, holds the deepest moral justification for use of armed force in the service of justice, I clearly belong among the constituency supporting war crimes proceedings. From my perspective, shaped by thinking of morality and war in just war terms, egregious violations of the rights of people caught up in a conflict constitute an injustice that is immoral not to seek to remedy.

Here again, Johnson frames the issue as a contest between classic just war theory and the presumption-against-war position. Logically, the latter will tend to side with the no-fault conflict resolution position since it sees conflict per se as the problem to which mere cessation of hostilities is the solution. But to refuse to prosecute war crimes, Johnson argues, undermines the protection of human rights by removing from consideration the idea of "crimes against humanity." Such proceedings assist also in reestablishing the rule of law, an essential step in the reconstitution of a civil society torn by conflict.

However, the most fundamental problem with the no-fault approach to conflict resolution is that it implies that future warfare by atrocity will also go unpunished, thus undermining the tradition's goal of a just and ordered peace (Augustine's *tranquillitas ordinis*). It is important to recognize, Johnson says, "that the way a war is fought and the purpose at which it aims, including the peace that is sought for the end of the conflict, are not unrelated, whether in practical or moral terms." If you doubt that, reflect on the lingering memory of Sherman's march to the sea, the impact it had on reconciling North and South, and how that has affected race relations in America.

Particularly helpful is Johnson's discussion of the highly contentious issue of "humanitarian intervention." He persuasively argues that the classic understanding of just cause permits the use of military force for humanitarian intervention across sover-

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eign borders. After the Peace of Westphalia, the idea of just cause was narrowed in positive international law to establishing defense, either by one nation or a coalition of nations, as the only justifying cause for use of force. Of course, this would, by definition, rule out intervention across sovereign borders.

Classically, however, the *jus ad bellum* requirement of just cause meant one or more of three possibilities: that the use of force was for defense against wrongful attack, for retaking something wrongly taken, or for punishment of evil. This premodern understanding of just cause would give greater latitude to states, coalitions of states, or even a single state acting unilaterally to prevent egregious violations of human rights and uphold fundamental international norms. Thus, Johnson suggests that the very recent erosion in customary international law of the traditional rule against intervention across state borders (and of absolute state sovereignty) is more in keeping with the traditional notion of just cause. In cases of rampant evil and injustice there is a moral obligation to intervene, subject to a certain prudential caution given to the obligations to other political goods, including obligations to the international order, to the political communities of intervening states, and to members of the society targeted for intervention.

On the issue of intervention, Johnson has a sympathetic assessment of the NCCB's 1993 statement *The Harvest of Justice is Sown in Peace*, which also insists on an obligation to intervene. He points out, however, how this stands in fundamental tension with the presumption-against-war position adopted by the bishops in *The Challenge of Peace*. Those adhering to the presumption-against-war position embedded in *The Challenge of Peace* logically would have to resist the broader and classical understanding of just cause (they want fewer, not more, reasons for using military force), and yet an expansive understanding is required to justify the purported obligation to intervene as expressed in *The Harvest of Justice*. While there was no major section in *The Challenge of Peace* on the use of armed force for the promotion of justice, *The Harvest of Justice* specifically listed Haiti, Bosnia, Liberia, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, and Burundi as particular conflicts where intervention was an obligation of the international community.

So the bishops seem to want it both ways. One can't help but think that the inconsistency between these statements is more the result of ad hoc reactions to contemporary issues and an attempt to placate Catholic pacifists than the result of careful reflection on the tradition. In fact, I tend to think Johnson is too charitable in calling this a "tension." A "tension" so fundamental is really a contradiction.

Unlike most who are sympathetic to the weakening of state sovereignty and inclined to defend humanitarian intervention, Johnson is not taken with the role of the United Nations. In classic terms, the *jus ad bellum* requirement of proper authority limits the right to authorize force to sovereign political entities, that is, those with no superior. However, international authorization for military intervention is now often claimed on the basis of consensus, as in United Nations Security Counsel resolutions, rather than on the basis of sovereignty.

Johnson argues that moral thought, including Catholic moral thought, over the last quarter century has been unduly shaped by a belief in the inherent "militarism and venality of states." Modern-war pacifists, he observes, have been fond of quoting John XXIII's *Pacem in Terris* as a minimalist defense of their position: "In this age which boasts of atomic power, it makes no sense to maintain that war is a fit instrument with which to repair the violation of justice." During the Cold War, the United Nations was not subject to the same moral reproach and was held up as transcending the failures of modern states. Because the UN could authorize military force only in peacekeeping operations and because the forces were always small and lightly armed and the resort to them infrequent, the UN was largely insulated from the criticisms of modern war directed at the military establishments of powerful states. Not surprisingly, after the Cold War the UN became the institution of choice for intervention and a way for modern-war pacifists to transcend the "militarism and venality of states." Military forces, with the moral and political approval of the United Nations, could now be embraced in defense of human rights.

This moral vision, however, failed to take adequate account of the fact that real power was not located in the international organization, but with individual states and coalitions of states. It tended to ignore the differences in the way specific states were constituted (what George Weigel has called "the regime factor") and the implications that these differences have for the just resort to and restraint of war. In short, it tended to overlook the fact that the structure of order defined through the UN was not one that could stand alone, but depended on viable states.

While the end of the Cold War set the UN free to act in accord with its Charter, including the right to intervene by force in conflicts where no peace had yet been established (e.g., Somalia and Bosnia), this new freedom highlighted the fundamental limits of the UN as an international organization: "It lacks in itself the attributes necessary to make it capable of effectively acting out this role stipulated in the Charter."

It lacks cohesion, for example, so that its policies

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and decisions are not consistent from conflict to conflict. It lacks sovereignty, depending on agreements among its sovereign member states. It lacks an effective chain of command for military forces it may place in the midst of an ongoing conflict, so these forces cannot be an effective arm of international statecraft. All these absent features are necessary characteristics of the state as a political institution, and their absence at once shows the limits of the role of the United Nations and the continuing importance of states in the international system.

All these deficiencies, Johnson perceptively observes, "are first and foremost defects in sovereign authority." And since, according to the just war tradition, "without such authority there is no entity competent to determine just cause and undertake military action on its behalf, this lack means that the United Nations as an institution cannot have *jus ad bellum* in the fundamental just war sense." Conversely, viable states possess what the United Nations does not: "competent authority to formulate policies and reach decisions regarding the just use of force, to exercise command over such force, and to assess their rights and responsibilities relative to ongoing conflicts." That should be a word of caution to all those who reflexively think a UN Security Council Resolution is morally necessary before a multilateral or even a unilateral military action can be just. A study of the failure of the UN inspection regime in Iraq would, I suspect, supplement and bolster Johnson's case on this point.

As Johnson realizes, this book will hardly be persuasive to political realists who will accuse him of going too far in taking account of moral concerns and international standards and values. The position he defends will also seem to be an immoral loosening of the strictures against the use of force by traditional pacifists and modern-war pacifists who continue to regard states "as incurably venal and all uses of force in the modern era as disproportionately destructive." But, as he insists, "between these two perspectives is precisely the territory of just war tradition, an understanding of statecraft in which the use of armed force in the service of justice is both permitted and restrained."

Johnson has ably defended and applied the classic just war tradition against contemporary modifications and distortions. This is practical moral philosophy and theology at its best. FT

On the Early Retirement of Dogs

Dogs, in their job of being man's best friend,
die young in human years, retire to
a scent-filled place where well-fed pets attend
and lick the sores of mangy Lazari.

I have outlived, in order: Cole, the Cocker;
Morry, Dachshund; Gertie, Airdale; Jenny,
Collie; Smitty, Ridgeback; I've watched the dogs
of others die: Granny's shepherd Blitz;
Barney, her fox terrier; Aunt Happy's
Great Dane, Inge, a pair of scotties, Duncan
and Fife; my brother's Mike, from Mexico;
a neighbor's corgi, Keesh, who bit my father.

Aging with me now, the bloodhound, Cleo,
and pointer-spaniel, Dotty, who thinks I am
her pup. She watches to make sure I don't
escape, and licks me when I'm near. I'd almost
let her take me with her when she goes.
Her nose is sound enough to find the dead
I'd want to throw my arms around. God grant
me in the afterlife a home with gracious
hearth and grounds for all these lovesome hounds.

Joyce S. Brown

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Books In Review

A Trinitarian Synthesis

Systematic Theology: Volumes I & II. By Robert W. Jenson. *Oxford University Press. Vol. I: The Triune God. 244 pp. $49.95. Vol. II: The Works of God. 380 pp. $55.*

***Reviewed by* Wolfhart Pannenberg**

It is remarkable, at least to a foreign observer of the American theological scene, that a theologian of the stature of Robert W. Jenson has not been accorded a place at the center of the American academic establishment. Since the 1960s, his books on the concept of God, on eschatological theology, on the Trinity, and on ecumenism have established him as one of the most original and knowledgeable theologians of our time. Jenson is a distinctively American voice in the worldwide endeavor to retrieve and reformulate a trinitarian theology. In pursuing this vision he started, as others did, from Karl Rahner's rule that the "immanent" and the "economic" Trinity—the eternal God and His activity in the history of salvation—are one. This led him to a "futurist option" for theology by conceiving of the kingdom of God and the Holy Spirit in terms of the future of God Himself.

Now Jenson presents the summary of his understanding of theology, a two-volume work on Christian doctrine. The first volume sets forth the doctrine of the Trinity, which in Jenson's view must include also the treatment of Christology. The second volume deals with the doctrines of creation, the Church, and eschatological "fulfillment." The entire work is strongly ecumenical. Its systematic unity is provided by the trinitarian perspective: from the beginning, the creation was intended for "inclusion" in the triune community by virtue of union with Christ, the purpose being a "perfected human community." That is the promise of the gospel which is anticipated in the life of the Church and is finally achieved in the final advent of the Kingdom.

Jenson's ambitious enterprise requires familiarity with the sources of Christian teaching through the centuries as well as with the biblical roots, and he displays an intimate knowledge of the Eastern Fathers as well as of Western figures such as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. He is fully acquainted with the ecumenical discussions and documents of our time, including the contemporary contributions of Orthodox theology. This is indeed a systematic theology in the grand style.

Jenson's thesis that serious Christian theology has to be trinitarian and that its treatment of the trinitarian life of God has to encompass everything else—creation, Church, and the eschatological future—corresponds to a growing consensus among the more thoughtful of contemporary theologians. Jenson is surely right in contending that the God of the Bible is identified by temporal events, and indeed by a history of such events. He boldly integrates this insight with his trinitarian theology by conceiving of the biblical narrative as "the final truth of God's own reality" in the mutual relations of God the Father, His incarnate Son, and the eschatological accomplishment of their communion by the Spirit. The emphasis on mutuality in the interaction of the trinitarian persons offers a corrective to the traditional tendency to conceive of them only in terms of relations of origin, which is to say in terms of the dependence of Son and Spirit upon the Father. In emphasizing the mutuality of the trinitarian relations, Jenson secures the potential for integrating his trinitarian doctrine with the history of salvation.

In the second volume, Jenson appropriates another growing theological consensus, this time with regard to the nature of the Church as communion. This understanding includes sacramental communion with Jesus, especially in baptism and eucharist, but also communion among all the members of the Church, who participate in that communion with Jesus, as well as the local congregations that participate in the one body of Christ, the universal Church. Here again, Jenson establishes a connection with the trinitarian communion, in which Christians now participate, and with the kingdom of God that will be the full and comprehensive realization of humanity's communion in the very life of the triune God.

Inevitably, an attempt at such an ambitious synthesis is not without its problematic aspects. In the case of Jenson's work, a problem arises already in his introductory chapter on "the identification of God." While he is surely right in affirming that the God of Israel and of the Christian faith is identified by temporal events such as the Exodus and the Resurrection, as well as by Jesus addressing Him as Father (which in turn identifies Jesus as Son), this does not clarify the meaning of the predicate "God" as it is applied to the God of Israel.

In the biblical language, the word *elohim* was combined with the proper name of the God of Israel, and later the word *theos* was used in the same way. Both these terms—*elohim* and *theos*—carried a prior understanding of the reality that was identified by the proper name of the biblical God. Jenson is not unaware of this fact, nor of the corresponding role of philo-

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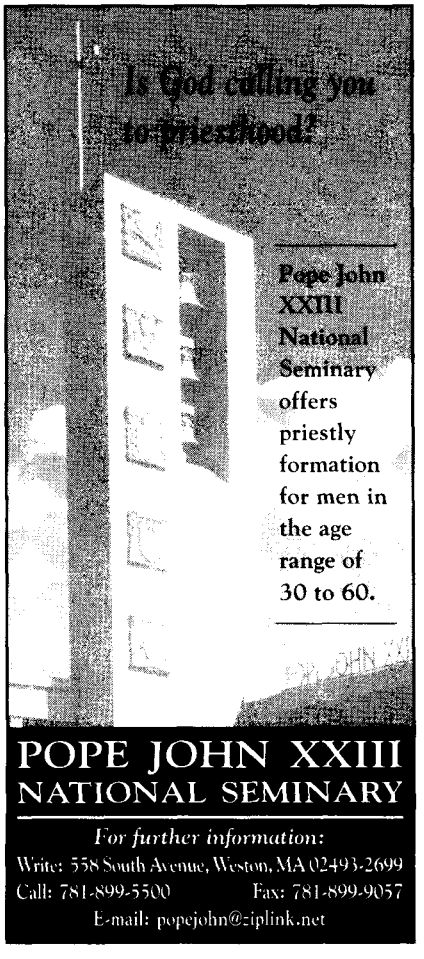
sophical ideas about God in the history of Christian theology, but he tends to disregard these matters. He rightly considers it a "temptation" that a philosophical concept of God could determine the distinctly *theological* discussion of trinitarian doctrine. Thus he shies away from treating the predicate "God" before addressing the question of the God of Israel.

But that predicate "God" must be examined, not least in order to correct philosophical conceptions of God in the context of Christian theology. In an earlier book (*Unbaptized God*, 1992) Jenson rightly criticized the "incomplete exorcism" of pagan elements in Hellenistic Christian theology, elements that have been influential throughout all subsequent Christian history. But criticism of such an "unbaptized God" does not dispense the theologian from arguing for the philosophical validity of the alternative he proposes. It is not enough to oppose philosophical concepts of timeless eternity by asserting the temporal character of God's action in history (the economic Trinity).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In Jenson's presentation, the difference between the "immanent" Trinity—the eternal communion of Father, Son, and Spirit—and the "economic" Trinity almost vanishes. It is certainly true that the trinitarian God in the history of salvation is the same God as in His eternal life. But there is also a necessary distinction that maintains the priority of the eternal communion of the triune God over that communion's explication in the history of salvation. Without that distinction, the reality of the one God tends to be dissolved into the process of the world.

A related difficulty is apparent in Jenson's account of "the being of the one God" in the trinitarian communion. The *perichoresis* of the trinitarian persons—meaning their life in mutual communion—presupposes the existence of the three persons. Hence it cannot constitute the unity of the one God without making that unity secondary to the existence of the three. Therefore the Eastern doctrine accounted for the unity of God in terms of deriving the Son and the Spirit from the Father. If theology now insists on the mutuality of these relationships, it must account for the divine unity as being in some way prior to the distinction of the three persons. It will not do to state, as Jenson does, that the three persons are "prior to the fact that God is." The Christian affirmation that there is one, and only one, God requires the notion of the one divine *ousia* or essence that the Father imparts to the Son and to the Spirit.

FURTHER DIFFICULTIES ARISE in connection with Jenson's understanding of the divine Logos as "speech." This insistence reflects the continuing influence of Karl Barth on Jenson's thought. God's speaking is certainly one aspect of the biblical concept of the word of God, but it is hardly the first and all-important aspect. The "word" in Hebrew is not only word but the thing itself, understood as event. In the first chapter of John's Gospel—the scriptural starting point of the Logos doctrine of the Church—Logos is a further development of the Jewish concept of God's wisdom. Only in this way could the Logos be understood as a hypostatical reality—a reality distinct from God but coeternal and one with God. Speech could not be the hypostatical reality that became incarnate in Jesus (John 1:14).

Nor, contra Jenson, is the divine Logos reducible to the preexistence of Jesus in the Father's eternal predestination. According to the doctrine of the Church, the Logos is a hypostasis of its own, distinct from the Father, but coeternal with Him. Speech is an image with limited value in Christian theology. If the Logos is understood only as speech, the God who "speaks" the Logos is not in His very life trinitarian. Moreover, speech cannot function as the principle that distinguishes the "otherness" of the creatures from the Creator.

In his doctrine of creation, Jenson focuses on the human being. The distinctive character of the human being is his active relationship to God. The human creature, we are told, is the "praying animal." This special relationship of human beings to God is indeed the point of the biblical affirmation that they are created "in the image of God." But their distinction is not that God speaks to them. In the biblical creation story God also speaks to the earth, directing her to cooperate in His creative work (Genesis 1:11, 24). The distinctive thing about human beings is that they are meant to be partners in His covenant and to represent the Creator, in the person of His Son, to the

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rest of creation. That constitutes, according to the fathers of the Church, the special dignity of human beings, and it should have been treated by Jenson in the section on "human personhood."

The discussion of the created universe of nature is not among the strong points of Jenson's work. There is little here about the relation of theology to the natural sciences. The sequence in the emergence of creatures in the biblical creation story and in the view of contemporary science, including the issue of evolution, is not discussed. Nor is there critical discussion of the limitation posed by Genesis 1 on the concept of creation in the beginning of the world, as distinct from the view of creation as a continuous process. The remarks on space and time do not take sufficient account of the history of these concepts and of the issues emerging from that history. When Jenson says that God is "present to creatures in their space" he is actually in agreement with Newton's doctrine of God and space, though he earlier accused Newton (wrongly) of having "blurred the line between Creator and creation."

One of the most brilliant chapters of the work, on the other hand, is "Politics and Sex." The human person, Jenson contends, is created for communion with others. The kingdom of God will bring about the final fulfillment of that destiny, and in the course of history it is provisionally realized in the Church and in the state. In his treatment of the state, Jenson takes his clue from Augustine, according to whom the ultimate good in the polity is peace. Peace is based on "consent in law," and consent is derived from a moral discourse rooted in the law of God Himself. That law speaks in the human conscience and is expressed by the Ten Commandments. The "second table" of the commandments (equivalent to natural law) spells out the "minimum conditions" of all social order. In this connection Jenson offers some harsh but not unjust criticism of American public morality with respect to the violation of the fifth commandment ("You shall not kill") in the instance of legalized abortion. It is a criticism that applies equally to other secularized Western societies. He further reclaims the place of the family and of "heterosexual monogamy" as indispensable in a just society.

This side of the kingdom of God, the human destiny of communion is

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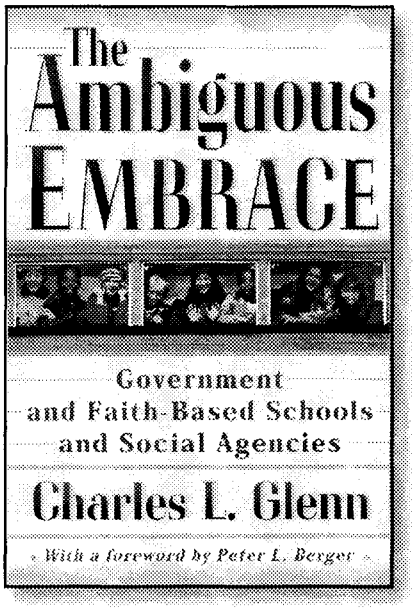
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realized more purely in the Church, the body of Christ, than in the state, where it is disfigured by human self-love and lust for dominion. Together with Israel, the Church is the people of God, and its communion is constituted by communion with Jesus. One should expect, then, that the Church's founding would be related not just in general terms to the Trinity, but more specifically to the Eucharist and to its institution by Jesus. The eucharistic communion is in the first place communion with Jesus himself. "The communion of the Church," Jenson writes, "is established only by communion with Christ." It is not clear, therefore, why Jenson chides me as "subtly sectarian" for making this very point in my own writings. The person of Jesus and therefore the issue of communion with him has to retain priority in the life of the Church. But the body of the risen Christ is not, as Jenson suggests, simply identical with the Church. If the reality of the body of Christ is not prior to the Church, how could Paul write that in the eschatological future the Lord will "change our lowly body to be like his glorious body" (Philippians 3:21)?

This also means that "body" is not only, as Jenson asserts time and again, the person as "available to others" and thus also "to oneself." The human body is first of all the full reality of the person, certainly with a relation to oneself but also in most intimate *identity* with oneself. In the case of the body of the risen Christ, believers participate in that reality, but it remains a reality that precedes and surpasses our participation. It is a merit of Jenson's work that he takes Paul's statements on the Church as body of Christ not only as a metaphor but literally. Yet the precise relationship between Church and body of Christ requires a more careful and differentiated treatment than it receives in these volumes.

IN ADDRESSING THE doctrine of the Church, Jenson takes up ministry and sacraments before turning to the authority and proclamation of the word. This is understandable from the point of view of a "communio ecclesiology." It is also legitimate, provided that the priority of the gospel is otherwise acknowledged. The thorny issue of eucharistic sacrifice is integrated by Jenson into the anamnetic theory of the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, which agrees with the best results in ecumenical dialogue. One might have expected more emphasis, however, on *epiclesis* or the invocation of the Holy Spirit in the eucharistic event since it is the Spirit who brings about the presence of Christ in the memorial of his death and who unites the faithful participants with Christ's offering of himself. The sacraments in general are treated by Jenson as "mysteries of communion" in accordance with the New Testament understanding of the mystery uniting Christ and his Church. But there is here no attempt to reconceive the Augustinian notion of sacrament as "sign" in the light of the biblical concept of mystery.

In discussing the ministry of the church as "office of communion," Jenson highlights the fact that in the historical development of episcopacy the concept of "bishop" changed from a local ministry comparable to that of the Protestant pastor to a regional ministry of oversight. But he does not, as one should expect, offer a critical evaluation of that development, which led to the result that the regional episcopacy is now considered the basic form of the Church's ministry. Jenson's discussion of the development of papal primacy, especially in the second millennium, lacks a necessary critical edge, although one might share his appreciation of the need for the ministry of a "universal pastor" in the life of the Church for the sake of her unity in the faith of the apostles.

One misses also an adequate emphasis on the critical function of Scripture and of the proclamation of the word in the life of the Church. The critical witness of Scripture and proclamation is necessary in order to

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maintain the priority of Christ and communion with him. Related to this, the crucial role of faith needs more emphasis in Jenson's discussion of justification. Jenson is to be commended, however, for noting the difference between Luther's teaching on justification—a teaching that focused on the unity of the soul with Christ in the act of faith—and a purely forensic doctrine of justification.

In his concluding section on eschatological fulfillment, Jenson's interpretation of the final judgment as "rectification" deserves particular attention. The overcoming of death (and sin), he writes, is "simultaneously" the transformation of the creature's natural finitude into the future that the Spirit will bring about. Though one notes a certain tendency toward affirming universal salvation, Jenson stops short of this consequence by declaring, "God can bring all to the kingdom, but He may not." He also observes that eternal damnation is not an article of faith.

In sum, the second volume's execution of the great trinitarian vision set forth in the first volume is less than entirely satisfactory. One misses a more carefully systematic treatment of the consequences and implications of Jenson's great vision as it applies to particular issues of Christian doctrine. Too often he seems to be taking up issues in an order that is determined more by rhetorical, even rhapsodic, impulse than by systematic necessity. Sometimes it is hard to discern the systematic function of a particular passage, while at the same point one looks in vain for a discussion of other questions that are necessarily related to the overall structure of his enterprise. At yet other times, one finds only a language of images where one would expect the rigor of conceptual analysis.

All that having been said, however, this two-volume systematic theology is a great achievement. Drawn from learning that is both vast and profound, the rich details and frequently exciting flashes of insight provided by this work confirm the stature of Robert Jenson among contemporary theologians—a stature that, it seems to this foreign observer, is not sufficiently recognized in American theology.

An Uncertain Legacy

Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind. By James E. Person, Jr. *Madison. 208 pp. $26.95.*

***Reviewed by* Jeremy M. Beer**

Russell Kirk's place in twentieth-century intellectual life is difficult to ascertain. Though long-since canonized as one of the fathers of modern conservatism, in large part because of his influential 1953 book *The Conservative Mind*, Kirk (who died in 1994) fits awkwardly with the other men identified as the founders of that movement. In *Russell Kirk: A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind*, James E. Person, Jr. refers to several different lists of "most important conservatives" that place Kirk with the likes of William F. Buckley, Jr., Milton Friedman, F. A. Hayek, and others. But if it were not for the historical accident of communism, the grouping of Kirk with the libertarian Friedman—and to a lesser extent, Buckley and Hayek—would make very little sense.

It is perhaps for this reason that during the 1990s Kirk has more often than not been paid empty homage by the influential think tanks and magazines within the conservative movement. That is, while

Jeremy M. Beer *is currently a Wilbur Fellow at the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal.*

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conservative leaders are only too happy to appropriate Kirk's name for the purpose of gaining intellectual credibility, they just as quickly ignore the specifics of his cultural criticism.

Person acknowledges but does not thoroughly explore this tension. While his book is an accurate, fair, and sympathetic exposition of the entire corpus of Kirk's work, comparatively little attention is given to the differences between Kirk and his fellow conservatives. Person's aim, much more modest than the title would seem to indicate, was to write "an introduction to Kirk's thought that will serve the intelligent, interested reader, in a manner accessible to the nonspecialist." At this he has succeeded.

Person devotes chapters to every significant aspect of Kirk's intellectual legacy, including his historical analyses, biographies, critiques of contemporary education, short stories, novels, literary criticism, social philosophy, and political economy. Person makes use throughout of the (surprisingly scarce) scholarly literature surrounding Kirk's work. Portions of Kirk's unpublished correspondence and quotations from major reviews of his books are also used to good effect.

PERSON BEGINS by acknowledging that for some readers Kirk's frequent recourse to phrases such as "the permanent things" and "moral imagination" can be more puzzling than enlightening. Person provides brief and helpful explanations of what Kirk meant by these locutions, but he himself employs them, and others like them, perhaps too freely throughout the book. This is understandable; Kirk's style, like Chesterton's, is infectious, and those deeply read in his work can come to feel perfectly justified in picking it up.

This tendency is one reason Person's discussion of Kirk's fiction is the strongest section of the book. Here Kirk's language is still fresh and new, and Person is able to provide a useful analysis of how Kirk's literary work illuminates the character of his thought. That thought was essentially moral, grounded in a thick understanding of the relationship between human nature, tradition, and transcendent being. Because Kirk believed that such an understanding was best apprehended and transmitted through imaginative literature, it is only right that his short stories and fiction best enable one to appreciate the character of his insight into the human predicament.

Thematically influenced by his reading in T. S. Eliot, Martin D'Arcy, Ray Bradbury, and especially Dante, Kirk nonetheless approached his themes very differently than they: through the ghost story. As Person explains, Kirk's stories tend to focus upon either "the reality of evil . . . and the nature of justice through violent retribution" or "the essential mystery of time and eternity."

Kirk's novels explicate similar themes through different means. He uses the formula of the Gothic tale to explore the character of evil in *Old House of Fear. A Creature of the Twilight* introduces the remarkable character of Manfred Arcane (sort of a suave and extroverted Russell Kirk, really), and mercilessly satirizes Marxist ideologues and the globalist pretensions of Western liberalism. Readers not familiar with Kirk's fiction will find this introduction appetizing, as Person leaves no doubt that Kirk possessed extraordinary literary skill. That skill was evident also in his literary criticism, which was admired by such luminaries as Allen Tate and Flannery O'Connor.

ALTHOUGH KIRK'S WORK in the areas of history and economics is today almost as little known as his fiction, it engaged—and sometimes infuriat-

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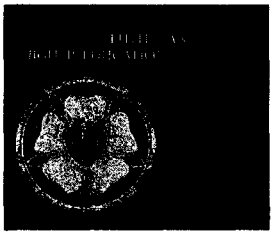

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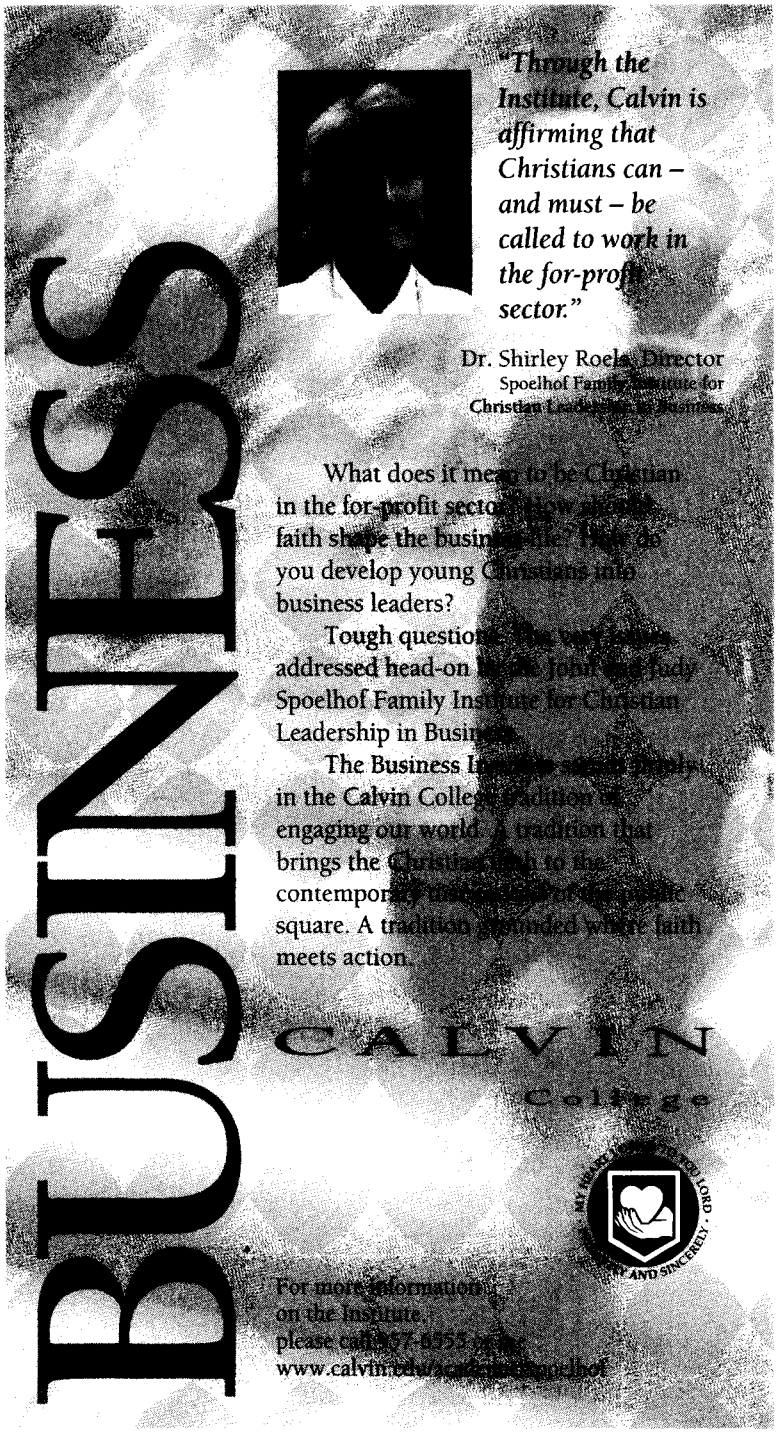
ed—some of the century's most influential writers and political thinkers. Person recounts, for instance, the feud between Kirk and political theorist Harry Jaffa over the character of the American founding and the political import of the Declaration of Independence. Kirk saw the so-called "Straussian" interpretation of the Declaration, with its emphasis upon the inherent equality of all men, as not only unhistorical but as necessarily tending toward egalitarian ideology, and he consequently worked to downplay the Declaration's significance. For the same reasons, he discouraged all talk of "the American experiment" as implicitly deceptive, and in several books—notably *America's British Culture* and *Rights and Duties*—attempted to show that the American Founders did not mean to inaugurate a new political order, but wanted only to preserve their English political heritage, with its Christian and classical roots, by the most prudent means possible.

In his economics, Kirk could be quite critical of capitalism (which was, as he always pointed out in his characteristic solicitude for proper usage, a Marxist word) as a political ideology, and for libertarians he had no use at all. Yet Person demonstrates that Kirk's feuds with libertarians and some neoconservatives belied his underlying faith in the essential justice of free markets—when they were not taken as self-justifying. Kirk especially admired the German economist Wilhelm Röpke's attempt to show how a market economy could be constrained to work on a humane scale and thus not subvert social stability and the moral order.

A particularly important and complicated facet of Kirk's thought is his analysis of the relationship between tradition and natural law. Kirk was often castigated by liberals and conservatives alike for upholding the claims of tradition, custom, and habit, while at the same time believing in universal, transcendent norms. This criticism fails, Person points out, because on any issue where the requirements of the natural law were clear, Kirk always conceded their precedence over tradition. More fundamentally, Kirk saw tradition and custom as means of apprehending transcendent ethical and moral truths. The thinker who sets aside all that has gone before him is absolutely sure to get things wrong. For Kirk, an important element of "right reason" was a thorough grounding in and respect for—though not blind adherence to—tradition.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PERSON IS FAITHFUL to Kirk's thought in showing him to be no friend to the modern governmental, industrial, technological, or commercial order—the leviathan state and leviathan business. But his antimodernism followed no automatic ideological pattern: Kirk criticized his fellow conservatives' obsession with economic matters; he did not believe that "government was the problem"; he questioned the wisdom of indiscriminate attempts to export democratic capitalism around the globe; he was a conservationist and a proponent of sound environmental policy; he believed that the small farmer and businessman should be protected; and he emphasized the importance of place and rootedness against the cult of mobility and cultural homogenization.

So where does Kirk fit? Person ends with a brief discussion of Kirk's enduring significance and influence, but a more complete assessment of this issue is necessary. As the champion of a kind of conservatism currently in eclipse, and as a man of letters who made his living outside academia, Kirk is in danger of falling through the cracks. Will he continue to be regarded as an important figure only in the recent history of political ideas, or will he be resuscitated as a living, breathing intellectual force to be grappled with, criticized, and built upon?

Person leaves this question unaddressed, but it seems certain that Kirk deserves better than either indifference or unconditional adulation. A critical appropriation of Russell Kirk's thought would be useful for those who wish to disavow the modern "domination of boredom and materialism" Person laments in exchange for a moral and aesthetic vision grounded in natural law and tradition. For those involved in this project, Person's excellent introduction to the range and tenor of Kirk's mind is a very good place to start.

Appearances and Realities

THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF WHAT? By IAN HACKING. *Harvard University Press. 261 pp. $29.95.*

***Reviewed by* Edward Pols**

IF YOU SUPPOSE that you *know* something towards which your attention is directed—another human being, your cat, a tree, the kitchen table—you also suppose that what you know has a reality independent of your act of knowing. That act (so you think) attains its target: it does not make, produce, or construct something *different* from the target, some creation that hides the real thing.

If, however, what you take to be knowing is merely "knowing"—if it is a constructing of something other than its target—then what you thought you knew is a mere appearance rather than a reality. The claim that what purports to be knowing is merely a constructing is a terrible one: it strikes at the very self-confidence of our rationality.

The general doctrine that includes such a claim is usually called antirealism. There are many versions of antirealism, some more relativistic than others. Kant, for instance, is an antirealist about commonsense and scientific knowledge, but he is not a relativist. For Kant, commonsense and scientific knowledge give us appearance rather than reality, but such appearances are not constructed according to individual or social wishes and whims. Kantian appearances are inevitable appearances, based on a union of sense and understanding that all human beings have in common. Accordingly, he takes the paradoxical step of calling this world of appearance objective: it is an objectivity that emerges, in response to the raw material of sensation, from the general nature of human subjectivity, which he sometimes calls transcendental subjectivity.

IAN HACKING'S *The Social Construction of What?* consists of a collection of his lectures and essays not all of which are directly related to the influential doctrine that gives the book its title and its central focus—the doctrine that some of the things that purport to be hard, resistant realities are in fact *socially* constructed. There are many versions of this doctrine, some of them highly relativistic. For such versions, each society or culture creates its own reality, and because societies and cultures change, reality changes with them. Indeed, there are no hard, resistant realities to set in contrast with this Heraclitean flux of "realities." Other versions of social constructionism are less extreme. It is perfectly reasonable, for instance, to claim that *some* supposed realities are social constructions. The conviction that people of certain races are subhuman and so should be treated as such is obviously the result of a social construction, one that any decent society should reject. But to say so is to contrast such a construction with the reality of our common human nature and the dignity intrinsic to it.

Professor Hacking is a distinguished representative of the school of analytic-empirical philosophy, so it is not surprising that he undertakes not to attack or defend the notion of social constructionism but rather to analyze it. He focuses on two questions: 1) Just *what* is said to be socially constructed? 2) What *motivates* someone to claim that this or that item is socially constructed? From Hacking's analysis at least two sensible and useful conclusions can be drawn. (I say *can* be drawn, because the machinery of his analy-

EDWARD POLS *is Kenan Professor of Philosophy and the Humanities at Bowdoin College. His books include* Radical Realism: Direct Knowing in Science and Philosophy *(1992) and* Mind Regained *(1998).*

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sis—machinery designed to produce rigor—makes it difficult to see that these are indeed his conclusions.) First, a conclusion about motivation: the reason for claiming some item to be a social construction is the judgment that the item in question is not a real, resistant thing but rather something that could be (and in most instances *should* be) changed. Hacking's second conclusion is about what is constructed: if X is in fact socially constructed, then X is not a hard, resistant, and inevitable reality but rather an idea/concept that merely expresses a certain social attitude toward some reality.

Notice, however, that I have had to use the term "reality" to express these sensible conclusions. Hacking himself is wary of this word and of other related words. Words such as "reality," "truth," "facts," "objectivity," and "relativism" are, for him, "elevator words." They tend to move us up and away from a level of discourse concerned with things that are clearly "in the world"; they are too "free-floating" in their meanings for someone whose intent is just "to analyze the idea of social construction." This linguistic puritanism is unproductive and, if I may be allowed to say so, unrealistic. It is an artificial limitation that makes some of Hacking's own analytic distinctions unclear and perhaps indefensible, even though the two conclusions mentioned above are both sound and useful.

Hacking begins his book with a list of twenty-four alleged social constructs taken from the titles of books containing the expression "social construction" or its variants. The analytic task is then reduced to the question "What is X?" where X is a placeholder for any of these items. Having forsworn the term "reality," Hacking is compelled to find another name for the status of such items. That is not easy, for the items he considers make up a wildly disparate collection: authorship, brotherhood, the child viewer of television, danger, emotions, facts, gender, homosexual culture, illness, knowledge, literacy, the medicalized immigrant, nature, oral history, postmodernism, quarks, reality, serial homicide, technological systems, urban schooling, vital statistics, women refugees, youth homelessness, Zulu nationalism.

Hacking chooses to say that all the items in this alphabetized list are "in the world in a commonsensical, not fancy meaning of that term," and he goes on to call them "objects, for

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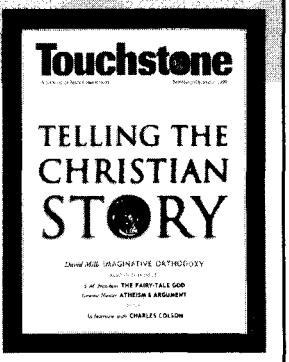

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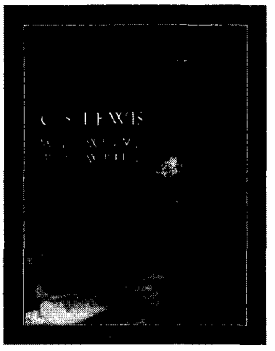

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lack of a better label." It certainly is a poor label for such a heterogeneous list. For one thing, some of the items are clearly more fundamental than others. Without people (also classified later as objects) there would be no authorship, brotherhood, child viewers, emotion, literacy, and so on. For another, some of the items (nature, facts, reality) seem to be not so much objects *in* the world as alternative ways of expressing the notion "world." Another item, gender, does not seem to be an object at all, but rather a new name for the true object, sex/sexuality, which, having been viewed as a social construction, has now been socially *reconstructed*, in great part because of the canny use of the politically correct name "gender." Insistence on politically correct words is one fairly simple form of social construction.

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IN HACKING'S terminology, for each object there is a corresponding idea, in this inclusive sense of that term: "ideas, conceptions, concepts, beliefs, attitudes to, theories"; also "groupings, classifications (ways of classifying), and kinds." All these ideas are formed in a social setting called a matrix. Simply put, it is the ideas, not the objects to which the ideas correspond, that Hacking thinks are socially constructed. Only the ideas are socially constructed directly, but some ideas interact with people, who move in the world of objects; and when this happens there can be an indirect social construction of objects, including people. Hacking calls these "interactive kinds." Thus the interactive kind woman refugee "interacts with things of that kind, namely people, including individual women refugees, who can become aware of how they are classified and modify their behavior accordingly. Quarks in contrast do not form an interactive kind; the idea of the quark does not interact with quarks." Quarks, Hacking tells us, belong to an "indifferent kind"; never does he make clear the important point that since ideas or kinds do not *act* at all, they cannot *interact*. It is people who act, although they may be influenced by the ideas they entertain.

The mention of quarks brings me to an important distinction about the role of construction in knowing—not just social construction but construction in general. Our knowledge of the in-the-world status of another person (or some other commonsense thing) is radically different from our knowledge of the in-the-world status of quarks—if quarks are indeed in the world. Our cognitive encounters with persons and other commonsense things are direct. When I encounter a real woman refugee, she is a directly known reality, not an appearance I have constructed out of raw material that originates in sensory stimuli. Indeed, my concern for her depends precisely on her *not* being such a construction. (I hope Prof. Hacking would agree with this realistic claim about commonsense knowledge, but I am not at all sure that he would.) No one has ever encountered a quark in that direct and cognitive way, and no one ever will. An immense and difficult body of theory must be absorbed before one can lay claim to an adequate notion of what quarks are thought to be, let alone the right to judge whether the readings at crucial points in the enormous apparatus that is a particle accelerator furnish evidence for the fleeting presence of quarks—or at least the fleeting presence of something or other.

CONSTRUCTION OF some sort is clearly going on in all this: construction of a body of theory, construction of an immensely complicated apparatus stretching over vast tracts of land—an apparatus that may plausibly be regarded as part of the theory. The idea of a quark is inseparable from all this construction and indeed may well be regarded as coextensive with it. Whether it is also a *social* construction, or a construction at least in part social, is a serious and important question. (Hacking's friendly debate in this book with Andrew Pickering, author of *Constructing Quarks*, is inconclusive.) But in any event, it is not possible to compare the body of theory about quarks with the real thing in the way that one can compare ideas about women refugees with a real woman huddled at some checkpoint.

As I have argued elsewhere, we may generalize the point about construction in science: much of science (though by no means all of it) is directed towards things/entities/events that cannot in principle be known directly. They must be known indirectly, if at all—known by virtue of a body of theory that is in an important sense constructed. This claim in no way impugns our direct knowing of commonsense things.

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The Cultural Revolution of Fascism

The Fascist Revolution: Toward a General Theory of Fascism. By George L. Mosse. *Howard Fertig. 230 pp. $35.*

***Reviewed by* Brian C. Anderson**

"Everything for the state, nothing outside the state, nothing above the state." So Benito Mussolini trumpeted the ideal of fascism, the wild-eyed political movement that he rode to power in Italy in 1922 and that died with Adolf Hitler's defeat in 1945.

Mussolini's infamous quote captures the remarkable hubris of fascism, its frightening impulse to rule over every dimension of life (the word is from the Latin *fasces*, the bundle of rods sporting an axe-head that symbolized the unchallenged state authority of Rome). In varying degrees, that hubris characterized fascism in all its historical forms: the Rexist movement in Belgium, the Spanish Falange, the Romanian Iron Guard, the French Fascists surrounding Jacques Doriot, and of course Mussolini's Italian thugs and Hitler's monstrous National Socialists.

But despite the bluntness of Mussolini's definition, fascism remains disturbingly enigmatic. What, exactly, were its central tenets? Unlike its equally murderous counterpart, Marxian socialism, fascism won power in the heart of Europe; it succeeded in gaining the uncoerced allegiance of ordinary men and women in a way Marxism never did. What was the source of its appeal? And is it historically obsolete?

Historian George L. Mosse, who died in January 1999, wrote extensively on fascism during his long and illustrious career; among his most important books on the subject were *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* and *Toward the Final Solution.* The present book collects ten of Mosse's essays on the subject, published over a period dating back to 1961. The essays, on everything from Fascist homoeroticism to Nazi political theater, are uneven, often turgidly written, and tend to leave promising suggestions frustratingly undeveloped, but at their best they help provide provisional answers to the three questions posed above. Most helpful of all is Mosse's method, which is to get inside the Fascist mind, to see fascism as it saw itself—a kind of phenomenology of politics that I believe is the most fruitful way to illumine the political world.

What were the main tenets of fascism? Though Mosse doesn't come close to a "general theory" of fascism, he correctly stresses the crucial role of nationalism—the "bedrock" upon which all Fascist movements built themselves. Fascism promised a "third way" between Marxism and capitalism that would celebrate the organic national community. To be German, Italian, or French, the Fascists asserted, meant something more than just inhabiting a piece of geography; it meant something outsiders could not really enter into, something beyond reasoned argument.

Mosse carefully distinguishes German National Socialism—in which a virulent racist ideology, drawing on social Darwinism, anti-Semitism, and various nineteenth-century racialist theories, wedded itself to nationalism—from other forms of fascism that downplayed or shunned racism. (In Italy, for example, fascism was nonracist for more than a decade

Brian C. Anderson *is Senior Editor of* City Journal, *author of* Raymond Aron: The Recovery of the Political, *and editor of* On Cultivating Liberty, *a collection of Michael Novak's writings.*

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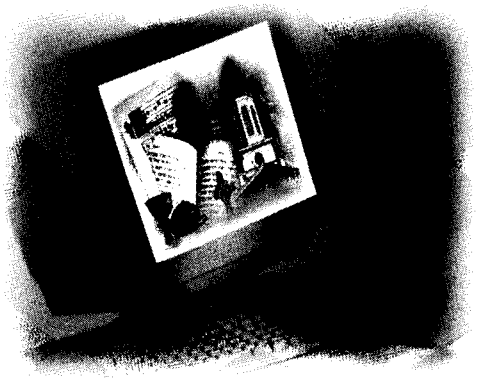

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until Mussolini cynically began to stoke anti-Semitism in 1938. The unholy alliance of racism and nationalism is one reason National Socialism proved so much more destructive than Italian fascism.)

But whatever the differences among the various Fascist movements, Mosse rightly underscores how the worthy evocation of national belonging can slide toward nationalism, and how nationalism, becoming aggressively xenophobic, can slide toward the abyss. Unfortunately, in these essays he gives little weight to the intellectual history of nationalism. (For that history one should turn to the recent, posthumously released book by Isaiah Berlin, *The Roots of Romanticism*, which describes the rise of fascism as growing out of the Romantic revolt against the Enlightenment.)

A SECOND MAJOR TENET or characteristic of all Fascist movements was the glorification of war and violence. Half-measures and compromises, Mosse notes, were anathema to all Fascists; these were typical of the craven bourgeoisie, Fascists held, not of the virile Fascist "new man." For Nazi propagandist Joseph Goebbels, for example, a true National Socialist would willingly carry out a scorched-earth policy or ruthlessly gun down deserters. Mussolini at one desperate point even threatened to execute schoolchildren who skipped classes. Fascists stressed the greatness of dying for the cause in war, the dignity of a mad heroism, and a willingness to struggle against all odds.

Nationalism and the love of violence and war—these are familiar themes in the copious literature on fascism's attributes. Where Mosse is most interesting is on Fascist irrationalism and on fascism and revolution. In a fascinating chapter, originally published nearly four decades ago, Mosse explores the roots of National Socialism in nineteenth-century mysticism. Recreating the feverish world of such forgotten late-nineteenth century writers as Julias Langbehn, Alfred Schuler, and Paul de Lagarde, Mosse paints a disquieting portrait.

These irrationalists despised the cosmopolitan—and in their view largely Jewish—bourgeois universe of calculation, contract, and money. Instead, they surrendered themselves to "a belief in nature's cosmic life force, a dark force whose mysteries could be understood, not through science but through the occult." In some of the most vivid pages in *The Fascist Revolution*, Mosse describes Schuler trying to cure Friedrich Nietzsche of his madness with an ancient Roman spring rite, bizarre seances, theosophical preachments, and much other anti-Christian and anti-Enlightenment nonsense—seemingly harmless until one realizes the culture of irrational barbarism it did its part in conjuring. But the Nazis weren't alone in their irrationalism; Mussolini, too, drank from its well, in his case from the thought of Nietzsche and the theorist of violence George Sorel, though Mosse unfortunately neglects to discuss these intellectual sources of Italian fascism.

IT IS IN MOSSE'S discussion of fascism and revolution that he makes his most important contribution. In contrast to those analysts, especially Marxists, who interpret fascism as reactionary—a kind of last gasp of bourgeois capitalism—Mosse accents its revolutionary thrust. Mussolini called for a "revolution of the spirit"; Hitler spoke of the "German Revolution." In Mosse's words, "Fascism encouraged activism, the fight against the existing order of things." Like all revolutionary movements, fascism in power had to restore order and prop up its own authority, diminishing revolutionary ardor; but fascism in its main thrust sought to remake the human world, to forge a new future—whether based on futurist ideas, as with Mussolini, or on an imagined pagan past, as with Hitler—that would break decisively with the corrupt and weak present. Though rightists and conservatives, sharing their rejection of the modern world, often supported Fascist movements, fascism was anything but conservative.

In a chapter dating from 1989, Mosse goes beyond the obvious political opposition between the spirit of the French Revolution and that of fascism to see deep commonalties and even subterranean influences that bind them across time. Mosse views both as products of the modern liberation of the will—rival manifestations of "the people worshiping themselves." Both the French Revolution and fascism sought to transcend the mundane complexities of politics and create perfect societies; both rejected the West's biblical heritage;

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both aestheticized politics in public festivals and songs. Writing of the French Revolution, Mosse observes: "This new politics attempted the politicization of the masses, which, for the first time in modern history, functioned as a pressure group and not just through episodic uprisings or short-lived riots." In fascism, says Mosse, "the age of modern mass politics had begun." The Jacobins' sacred spaces—the Champs-de-Mars or the Tuileries—would find their amplified echoes in Forum Mussolini in Rome and in Nuremberg.

Mosse, a historian and not a philosopher, remains on a somewhat superficial level in his account of fascism as a pathology of democratic modernity—as based, in essence, on a rejection of the West's Jewish and Christian heritage. Major scholars of fascism—Hannah Arendt and Ernst Nolte come immediately to mind—make no appearance in Mosse's book; a pity, since their more philosophically informed thinking would have added needed depth to Mosse's treatment. But his interpretation is essentially correct. National Socialism especially, as the Hungarian Catholic philosopher Aurel Kolnai wrote in 1950, sought to negate "Christian civilization as such," scripting a dark epiphany in which man "wrenched himself free from Christianity and construed the automatic workings of his fallen nature into a mirage of self-made heaven." As with all such self-made heavens, it opened the gates to a netherworld.

These four marks of the Fascist spirit—nationalism and racism, a love of violence and war, irrationalism, and revolutionary presumption—though not exhaustive, help us to understand its appeal during the first half of the twentieth century, particularly where democratic institutions were feckless and resentments bred by World War I festered.

Fascism brought with it a thick set of assumptions about the world's past, present, and future. It was, as Raymond Aron noted during the late 1930s, a "secular religion," a complete vision of life that brooked no pluralist opposition but that, unlike Marxism, crossed class divisions. In Mosse's similar language, fascism wrought a "sacralization of politics" that made it demonic but that also allowed it to sink its hooks deep into the soul.

What of our third question: does fascism have a future? It is fascism's modern genesis that gives one pause in declaring its historical senescence. Although Mosse does not stress this here, fascism shared with communism an antipathy toward the bourgeoisie, which helps explain

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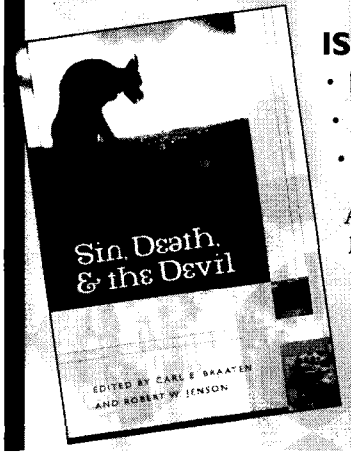

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its attraction for intellectuals like the philosopher Martin Heidegger and the French novelist Pierre Drieu la Rochelle. Modern man's revolt against anything constraining the will is a problem that confronts the democratic world, too. For all the unprecedented freedoms and decencies of liberal democratic regimes, certain tendencies within those regimes—aborting unwanted children, euthanizing the old and burdensome, a rising irrationalism—are eerily reminiscent of the mental universe of fascism in their elevation of the untrammeled human will above any constraints of nature, grace, or even reason. Nationalist movements in Europe stand perilously close to fascism at times.

Perhaps fascism represents a permanent temptation of modern politics, the seduction to leave behind the ambiguities and trade-offs of prosaic liberal democracy for a true (and truly destructive) "politics of meaning." If so, we need to be perpetually on guard against it, and George Mosse's intelligent reflections are of much more than historical interest.

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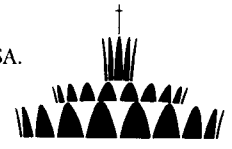

BRIEFLY NOTED

Imperfect Conceptions: Medical Knowledge, Birth Defects, and Eugenics in China. By Frank Dikötter. *Columbia University Press. 288 pp. $27.50.*

The evil of eugenics, practiced tragically and widely in the United States, England, and Germany earlier in the century, remains a driving force in the People's Republic of China. Indeed, in 1995 national legislation firmly installed eugenics as official government policy. What does this mean? In a dry but disturbing book aimed at fellow academics, Frank Dikötter describes the legitimization in China of all the evils long associated with the eugenics movement: forced sterilizations of the "unfit," eugenic late-term abortions, forced abortion under the "one-child" policy, and the public promotion of the odious concept that babies born with disabilities have "zero value lives" and whose killings are to be encouraged for the good of the family and the country. After reading *Imperfect Conceptions*, I was left to wonder how our government can possibly promote China's entrance into the World Trade Organization when its public policies are so eerily similar to those engaged in by Germany sixty

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years ago. But then I remembered: we are the country in which Princeton University appointed Peter Singer to a tenured ethics professorship despite the fact that he approves of killing disabled infants and advocates a brand of "utilitarian" philosophy that generously accommodates the ambitions of the eugenics project. If Singer ever gets tired of Princeton, he might find a warm welcome in the PRC.

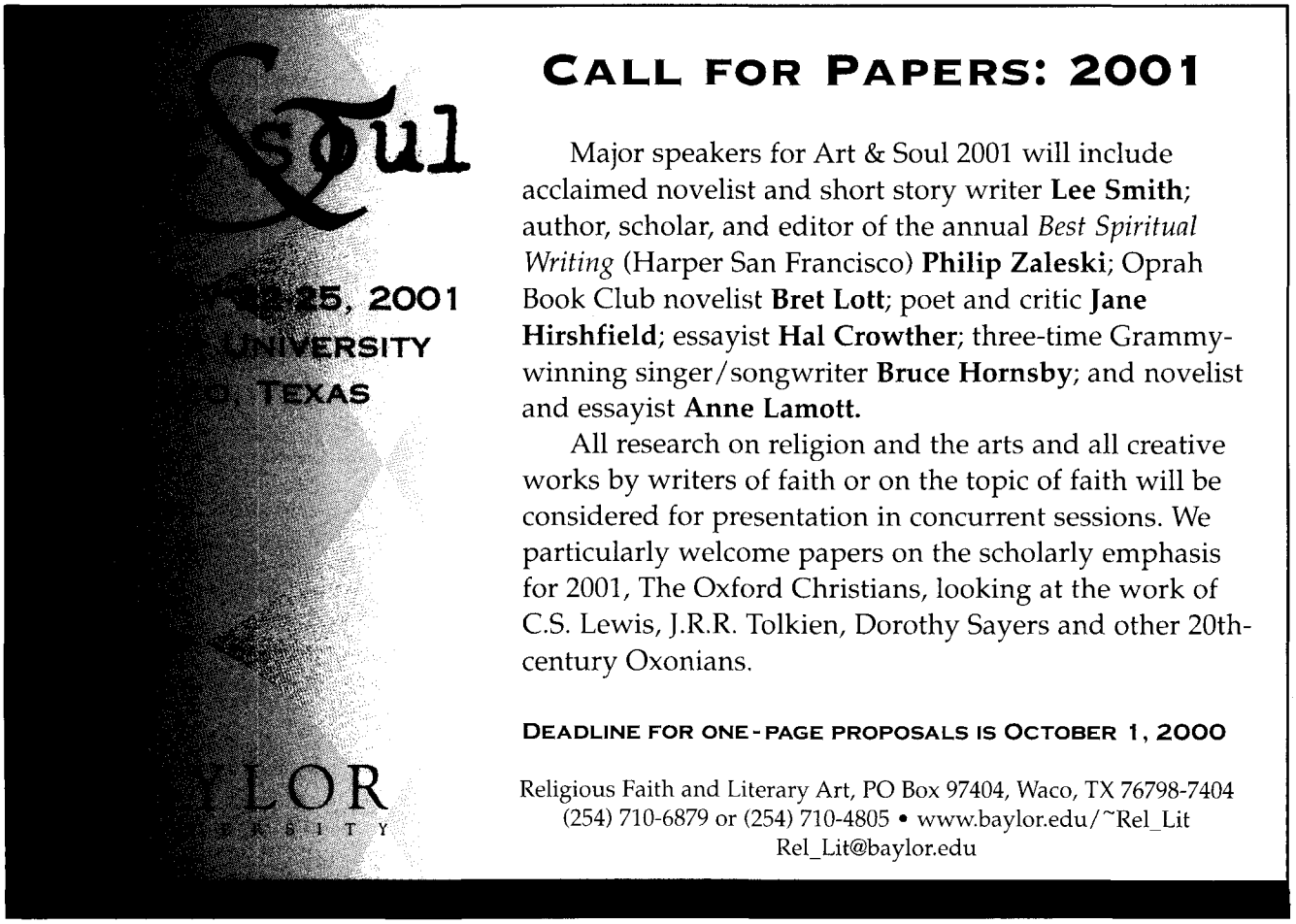
— *Wesley J. Smith*

The Postfoundationalist Task of Theology: Wolfhart Pannenberg and the New Theological Rationality. By F. LeRon Shults. *Eerdmans. 270 pp. $25 paper.*

Wolfhart Pannenberg, a German Lutheran, is indisputably one of the theological giants of the last one hundred years. His work is not well received, however, in the current academic climate of sundry postmodernisms. Shults makes a valiant and erudite effort to remedy this by arguing that Pannenberg is not so captive to the "foundationalism" (a very dirty word) of the Enlightenment as his critics claim. Pannenberg's understanding of theological truth largely takes for granted the perspectival, relative, and contextualizing dimensions of knowledge with which antifoundationalists are so obsessed. One wishes Shults well in making Pannenberg's immense achievement more attractive to those caught up in current academic fashions, but Robert Jenson probably got it right when he wrote in these pages that we should hope that Pannenberg is being neglected only long enough to be rediscovered. That will happen when theologians rediscover the inescapability of the challenge to think coherently about reason, history, revelation, and the human prospect.

Intelligent Design: The Bridge Between Science and Theology. By William A. Dembski. *InterVarsity. 311 pp. $19.99.*

Mathematician-philosopher Dembski is the author of the acclaimed *The Design Inference* (Cambridge University Press), and the present book is a more accessible statement of the argument for nonspecialists. Parts of the book appeared as articles in these pages. Included here, and of most particular interest, are approximately seventy-five pages of Demb-



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All research on religion and the arts and all creative works by writers of faith or on the topic of faith will be considered for presentation in concurrent sessions. We particularly welcome papers on the scholarly emphasis for 2001, The Oxford Christians, looking at the work of C.S. Lewis, J.R.R. Tolkien, Dorothy Sayers and other 20th-century Oxonians.

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ski's responses to objections that have been raised to the arguments presented by himself and others. An important book that deserves a wide audience.

AMERICAN COMPACT: JAMES MADISON AND THE PROBLEM OF FOUNDING. By GARY ROSEN. *University Press of Kansas. 237 pp. $29.95.*

Madison has always been among the most confounding of the Founders. At once republican and aristocrat, defender of nationalism and supporter of states rights, populist and elitist, he has more than once evaded the grasp of historians. Gary Rosen, associate editor of *Commentary* and Ph.D. in political science from Harvard, sets out in this excellent book to explain, if not resolve, Madison's philosophical and political inconsistencies. The key, Rosen argues, is Madison's understanding of the social compact: his wisdom lay in combining faith in the capacity of the multitude for dignity and independence with the knowledge that, being generally unruly, they would need to be governed—not by tyrants but by men of prudence. It is this ability to bring together disparate elements in human society and political philosophy alike that most distinguishes Madison's political vision from that of his predecessors and peers and gives it such continuing vitality. With this book, Rosen goes a long way toward bringing Madison back into our public discourse; it is a great service to the discipline of history and the legacy of an important statesman.

CHRISTENDOM AWAKE: REENERGIZING THE CHURCH IN CULTURE. By AIDAN NICHOLS, O.P. *Eerdmans. 255 pp. $28 paper.*

In a wide-ranging survey of the ills and hopes of contemporary Christianity, a prolific English Dominican sounds the trumpet of faith to wake Christendom from the slumbers induced by spiritual lethargy and fear. He cites approvingly Cristina Scott, writing on Christopher Dawson: "Christendom is simply the society which has been informed by the Church." His thoughts on what Christendom might look like today and tomorrow are informed also by the work of Oliver O'Donovan. By the Church, Nichols means chiefly the Catholic Church, but also those of "Catholic sympathies" and the many evangelicals subscribing to C. S.

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Lewis' "mere Christianity." His suggestive treatment of ecumenism accents, quite appropriately, the singular place of Orthodoxy, while his thinking about a Christian social order leans, quite implausibly, upon constituting some kind of international monarchial principle combined with a Chesterton-like distributism. Flashes of insight and occasional indulgences of eccentricity mark a book that is, all in all, a tour de force in its call for Christianity to recover its theological, spiritual, and moral nerve.

The Awakening. By Friedrich Zuendel. *Plough. 147 pp. $10 paper.*

A stirring tale of spiritual awakening in a nineteenth-century German parish led by Johann Christoph Blumhardt, the legendary leader of the Bruderhof. Part of a biography of Blumhardt by the same author.

Suffering Divine Things: Theology as Church Practice. By Reinhard Hütter. *Eerdmans. 314 pp. $25 paper.*

An exceedingly technical discussion of the ideas of German and American, mainly Protestant, theologians who are exercised by sundry construals of postmodernism and what they might mean for the "pathos" of doing theology. Strictly for specialists in a subspecialty, the book might more aptly be subtitled "theology as academic practice."

Surveying the Religious Landscape. By George Gallup, Jr. and D. Michael Lindsay. *Morehouse. 171 pp. $17.95 paper.*

Over these many years, George Gallup has been feeling the religious and spiritual pulse of Americans and the present book reports on what he finds today in the context of what he has found in the past. His diagnosis is that religion continues to be vibrantly, albeit confusedly, alive in America. Admittedly, there is not much news here, but the book is a very handy summary and overview of what survey research can tell us about, so to speak, the state of the nation's soul.

Called to Counsel. By John R. Cheydleur. *Tyndale. 229 pp. $24.95.*

The author, a leader in the Salvation Army, calls this a "counseling skills handbook," and it is precisely that—a very accessible presentation of the ABCs of helping people in trouble, framed by Christian understandings of the human person, the family, and the meaning of health. Clergy, social workers, and others who are regularly called to intervene in difficult circumstances will want to give this book a careful look.

The Ever-Illuminating Wisdom of St. Thomas Aquinas. By Ronald McArthur, John M. Haas, Ralph McInerny, Peter Kreeft, Russell Hittinger, and Marie I. George. *Wethersfield Institute. 150 pp. $11.95.*

This book brings together six papers presented at a 1994 conference sponsored by the Wethersfield Institute around the general theme of Thomas' "philosophy and theology of the real," with topics such as the link between philosophy and personality, the relationship of nature and grace, and the rule of law. The result is winsome, engaging, and wise—the perfect volume to give to one who wants a concise introduction to the Angelic Doctor or one who needs a dose of graceful, bracing good sense. (The two, of course, may be one.)

Guarded by Mystery: Meaning in a Postmodern Age. By David Walsh. *Catholic University Press. 180 pp. $19.95 paper.*

A professor of politics writes about the spiritual quest in a time dubbed "postmodern," meaning that the older rational securities have been shattered. Walsh ranges widely—from literary criticism to politics and art—in lifting up the luminous hints of the transcendent in the everyday. A most thoughtful reflection that should have a broad appeal.

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THE PUBLIC SQUARE

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Richard John Neuhaus

By the Blood of His Cross

There is this odd thing that all the social science data agree that the United States is ever so much more religious, so much less secularized, than Western Europe. Yet I keep bumping into people who say that, when they are there, they are impressed that religion seems to be more *publicly* present. I expect one reason is that, whatever the different levels of religious belief and practice, the English, French, Germans, and others know that, whatever cultural identity they have, it is inextricably tied to Christian civilization. American identity, by contrast, is tied to abstract principles such as those of the Declaration of Independence which, at least in the last half century, have been publicly divorced from the civilizational matrix that gave them birth and can alone sustain them. The period of the American founding was a brief moment in which leading citizens such as Jefferson and Madison were enamored of what was thought to be the more "universal" language of the Enlightenment. Although with few exceptions the Founders were devoutly Christian, they were persuaded by influential thinkers of the time that biblical particularities could be smoothly translated into the vocabulary of nature and reason. A thought experiment: how would the Declaration of Independence have read had it been written a half century earlier, or later? In any event, herewith an editorial in the London *Times* published last year while the U.S. and NATO were bombing Serbia. One cannot imagine a similar editorial in any American newspaper of influence.

Making Peace by the Blood of His Cross

A Good Friday in a week of bombings, massacres, and ethnic cleansing is a stark reminder that the Christian gospel is no philosophical theory or mere symbolic story. It is a gospel of salvation that has at its heart the execution by barbaric torture of a particular man in a particular place at a particular point in time. What we remember on Good Friday is all of a piece with Kosovo today—and with the judicial murders and tortures of every century of human history. Golgotha, the place of the skull, where nails smashed through the wrists and feet of Jesus, the teacher from Nazareth in Galilee, can stand for the skulls of every genocide. Betrayal by friends, self-preserving denial, making sport with prisoners, the mockery of crowds, spectators drawn to the spectacle, the soldiers doing their duty and dicing for his clothes, a mother in agony and a knot of women helplessly looking on—it all happens time, and time, and time again.

Jesus was put to death in an occupied nation. His Crucifixion was the direct consequence of his challenge to the religious authorities of his day. It was no less a convenient way for a jittery Roman governor, nervous of trouble at Passover time, to get rid of a potential threat. The context of the Crucifixion of Jesus was a cocktail of religion and politics. Yet although this anchors it in history, we are compelled to look deeper to see why the Cross is the mark of Christian identity and the disclosure of what God is like.

The Gospels mark the ministry of Jesus with predictions of his passion. Sacrifice and suffering are at the very heart of who he is. As Dostoevsky

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affirmed, "Loving humility is a terrible force: it is the strongest of all things and there is nothing like it." Jesus proclaimed the coming of the kingdom, or rule, of God, a kingdom that was neither pursued nor established by the ways of violence and power. His kingdom, as he tells Pontius Pilate in St. John's Gospel, is "not of this world." Only if it were would his servants fight.

And yet there is a fight, a fight of a cosmic order of which he is at the heart. The ministry of Jesus is seen as a wrestling with the powers of evil, an engagement with that engulfing darkness named as sin and death. When Judas goes out to betray Jesus, St. John notes that it was night, and at the Crucifixion, the culmination of this struggle, the Gospels record that there was darkness over the land.

Jesus comes to do his Father's will, showing that will to be a love going to the uttermost, reaching out into the very darkness of Hell, plumbing the depths of human sin, betrayal, abandonment, and rejection. In a costly work of reconciliation he defeats the powers of darkness and establishes peace. That peace is the reconciliation of a sinful, fallen humanity, caught in a web of the worship of false gods, and driven by selfish desires, with the God who made men and women in the image of His love that they might reflect His likeness. It is called simple "atonement," making one again. So peace is made "by the blood of His Cross."

Good Friday is "good" only because of Easter. The Passion story without the Resurrection would be vastly different. It is the hope kindled by the Easter encounters with the Risen Jesus that makes all things new. In the light of Easter we see that love's redeeming work was indeed done through the Cross, not apart from the Cross. There the fight was fought and the battle won. The Resurrection is . . . the declaration of a victory won on the Cross, and in the darkness and silence of death, and even in the hell of utter apartness from God. From there Christ rose again in triumph.

And the Easter good news of the Cross and Resurrection has been found to bring hope and life in the most appalling situations, in refugee camps, on battlefields, and in the most abject human misery. On Good Friday and at Easter we know that even if we go down to Hell God is there also, for Christ's blood does indeed "stream in the firmament," and in that blood, love going to the uttermost, we do indeed find our peace.

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DAWSON AND THE DAUNTING QUESTIONS

We owe a debt to the Catholic University of America Press and to editor Gerald J. Russello for *Christianity and European Culture: Selections from the Work of Christopher Dawson* (262 pp., $24.95 paper). The appropriate way to pay that debt is to go get the book and read it. Dawson (1889-1970) was once a very big item, although in recent decades he has been sadly neglected. One hopes this excellent selection will help introduce him to another generation, for the questions he addressed become ever more urgent at the beginning of a new millennium. In the 1930s, T. S. Eliot, with perhaps a touch of hyperbole, called Dawson the most powerful intellectual influence in Britain. He was also an important contributor to Eliot's journal, the *Criterion.*

As the essays collected here demonstrate, Dawson dared to risk historical and intellectual generalizations—his critics called them sweeping generalizations—and thereby provoked the displeasure of pedants who raised endless quibbles. He was not a professional historian in the academically respectable sense, but a layman of vast and deep learning who wrote history for the educated public. He was from 1958 to 1962 the first holder of Harvard's Charles Chauncey Stillman Chair in Catholic Studies (a chair that, one may note in passing, has since fallen prey to parties alien to the vision of both Dawson and Stillman), which gained him considerable recognition in this country, and in 1946-47 Dawson gave the distinguished Gifford lectures, which issued in two books, *Religion and Culture* and *Religion and the Rise of Western Culture.*

The titles indicate his abiding interest, and his determination to persuade us that we cannot understand where we are as a civilization, or how we lost our way, or where we go from here without understanding religion as the primary variable in the constituting and sustaining of culture. His arguments had a great influence upon me in my formative years, and I would like to think that, were he alive today, Christopher Dawson would be a regular contributor to this journal. If I have a quibble about the present selection of essays, it is that the title should refer to Western culture rather than European culture. Of course there are those who contend that the terms are synonymous, with America being at present the most important location of European culture, but I do not agree with that, and neither did Dawson. In his comprehensive concepts of "the six ages of the Church" and the

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"seven stages of Western Civilization," he recognized that something new and important is happening in America. His intuition that there would be in the not distant future a positive reaction to modernity's relentless secularization was linked, in important part, to the American prospect.

Scholars of a more secular bent frequently dismissed Dawson as a "medievalist," meaning not his field of study but his disposition. Dawson did not take it as an insult. Unlike some Christian romantics, however, Dawson had no use for the idea that the way forward is to go back to, say, the thirteenth century. He did much of his work at a time when many of the brightest and best thought liberal democracy was moribund. The wave of the future, it was said, is the comprehensively planned, indeed totalitarian society, whether of the National Socialist or Marxist variety. Dawson did not believe that, or at least he was not prepared to surrender to it without putting up a fight. What is best in the liberal tradition of Western culture, he contended, can be protected and revitalized only by reasserting the soul of that culture, which is Christianity. This means that in the academy and in popular consciousness, the successes and failures of Christendom—the period roughly from Constantine to the sixteenth century—should be given equal status with Greco-Roman classicism and the achievements of modernity. This, he insisted, is who we are; and we cannot possibly give a convincing reason for the defense of who we are unless we know who we are.

After World War II, Europe was divided between Western and Soviet spheres. "This frontier, which passes through the heart of Central Europe," Dawson wrote, "is not merely a political boundary; it is a line of division between two alien worlds which excludes the possibility of social intercourse and cultural communication, so that the man who wishes to pass from one part of Europe to the other is forced to abandon his citizenship and become a fugitive and an exile." Like John Paul II and others, Dawson had no truck with the dominant idea at the time that Communist rule was a permanent feature and the best we could hope for was "peaceful coexistence" or, in the long term, some kind of "convergence." He wrote that "the present division of Europe is so recent and so artificial that it is difficult to believe in its final character." After the end of the evil empire, Dawson's reflections on the meaning of Europe and its importance for the world should be required reading for the current builders of the European Union.

The essays from the 1930s are haunted by the fears that all modern states, including those called democratic, are driven by a totalitarian impulse, that "the machine" would increasingly be the master of its maker, and that education and culture-formation would be increasingly centralized and conformist. They are warranted fears, then and now. Yet I expect Dawson would be encouraged by today's ascendancy of liberal democracy as the normative political order; surprised by the machine that turned into a digital revolution whose dynamic, it is reasonable to think, is more decentralizing than centralizing; and greatly heartened by current trends, notably in this country, toward dismantling the state monopoly in education.

I am not sure what he would think now about the big question of secularization and the possibility of a Christian culture. At one point he writes, "It is clear that contemporary culture can no longer be regarded as Christian, since it is probably the most completely secularized form of culture that has ever existed." But later: "There can, I think, be little doubt that the present phase of intense secularization is a temporary one, and that it will be followed by a far-reaching reaction. I would even go so far as to suggest that the return to religion promises to be one of the dominant characteristics of the coming age."

In another essay he quotes Eliot, who wrote in *The Idea of a Christian Society*: "A society has not ceased to be Christian until it has become positively something else. It is my contention that we have today a culture which is mainly negative, but which insofar as it is positive, is still Christian." In that essay, Dawson suggests that Eliot underestimates the degree to which secularism "has become positively something else." On this point, I find myself more on Eliot's side, and we should note that Dawson is elsewhere more ambivalent. As I have urged in these pages, ours is still a Christian society—incorrigibly, confusedly, and conflictedly so. The other things—consumerism, hedonism, radical individualism, gnostic spiritualities, and so forth—are declensions from Christianity. They are not "positively something else." My point is that it is misleading and all too easy to speak about ours as a "post-Christian" society. It is contrary to social fact, and it lets Christians off the hook, giving us a neat excuse for not accepting responsibility for the cultural and moral crises of our country.

As I say, Christopher Dawson takes on the daunting questions of his time and ours. *Christianity and European Culture* is a good place to get acquainted, or to revisit an old acquaintance. He was convinced that Christianity is necessary to the West, but rejected the idea—advanced by some who have an instrumental view of religion—that Christianity should be embraced to shore up Western culture. "Nothing could be more fatal to the spirit of Christianity than a return to Christianity for political reasons," he wrote. Or, as it was said upon the launching of this journal, "The first thing to be said

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about public life is that public life is not the first thing." I am rather sure that Christopher Dawson would agree.

FT

Always a Priest, Always Present

John Cardinal O'Connor had a reception at his residence to celebrate the publication of my most recent book, *Death on a Friday Afternoon: Meditations on the Last Words of Jesus from the Cross* (Basic). It was a quite splendid occasion, although His Eminence could not be there. He was confined to his bed, having taken a turn for the worse. The day before he could not say the Sunday Mass at St. Patrick's Cathedral, an event he never misses if at all possible. He asked Bishop Patrick Sheridan to stand in for him at the reception, and the bishop did a most able job of hosting the affair. On such occasions the author is expected to say a little something, and I took the opportunity for a brief tribute to my friend who was now into his final days as Archbishop of New York.

Thank you, Bishop Sheridan, for your gracious introduction. You said something about this handsome residence, and it is that. I have to tell you, though, that a prelate friend in Rome was recently taking me through his truly palatial quarters, by comparison to which this handsome residence is in the low-rent district. Murals in the bathroom by Raphael, drawing room decor by Bernini, and baroque splendor for days. "It isn't home," says my friend, "but it's much."

This reception is one more item on a very long list of debts I owe Cardinal O'Connor. In fact, the debt is beyond calculation. I first came to know the Cardinal when he arrived here as Archbishop in 1984, and our institute was able to be of some little help in his settling in to New York. Of course, some have thought him a most unsettling presence over these sixteen years, but that, not to put too fine a point on it, is their problem.

I think I can fairly say that we hit it off from the beginning, and he made it a point that I should call him my friend. Thus has he been for all these years "my dear and eminent friend." On September 8, 1990, on the Feast of the Nativity of Mary, he received me into full communion with the Catholic Church, and a year later, on the same day, ordained me a priest of the Catholic Church. It was, in his understanding and mine, the sacramental completion of a ministry undertaken many years earlier as a Lutheran pastor.

In 1989 the Cardinal issued a pastoral letter on the priesthood, also dated September 8, the Nativity of Our Lady. The letter is titled, "Always a Priest, Always Present." There he wrote, "I believe that suffering is of the essence of the priesthood. The priest is preeminently a man of sacrifice." This I have noted about the Cardinal over the years, that for him the priesthood and the Mass are always under the sign of sacrifice. The Eucharist, as you know, is many things: a meal in memory of Him; a communion of the living and dead in Christ; an anticipation of the eschatological Feast of the Lamb. But in the preaching and piety of John Cardinal O'Connor, it is preeminently the *sacrifice* of the Mass.

Perhaps some of you, too, have been impressed by the homiletical specificity and force with which he portrays the action of the Liturgy as the reenactment of the suffering, death, and glorious resurrection of Christ. At the epicenter is always the Cross. It is the sacrifice of the Mass not as the repetition of Calvary, to be sure, but as re-presentation to the Father and to us. "Always a Priest, Always Present." Always a priest as one is present at and in the sacrifice of Christ, our high priest.

In the thought of the Cardinal, and in the testimony of his life, sacrifice is fulfillment, and the immeasurable joy of participating in the redemptive suffering of Christ, which embraces all the sufferings of the world. In the Cardinal's present weakness he knows yet more deeply that fulfillment and that joy. Redemptive suffering leaves its mark. In the pastoral letter on the priesthood he wrote, "It has always impressed me that even his risen body was scarred with the wounds of the Crucifixion. I cannot imagine an unscarred priest, a priest without wounds, because I cannot imagine an unscarred Christ." Those of you who have already read *Death on a Friday Afternoon* know that the last chapter, on the last word from the Cross, is titled "The Scars of God." About that, too, I have learned from my dear and eminent friend.

In recent weeks there have been a number of public events in tribute to the Cardinal. At one of them, the President of the City Council said that, in the more than three hundred years of New York City, no public figure has left as great a mark for the good. I haven't been here for three hundred years, but I'm not inclined to argue with that.

The Cardinal speaks often of his father, who was a

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highly skilled craftsman in Philadelphia. He was a gold-leafer, meaning that he applied gold to buildings and works of art. The Cardinal has followed in his father's steps. It is a different kind of gold, of course: a human gold not untouched by the divine; the gold of kindness, of generosity, of uncompromised witness to the truth, of devoted service to the end.

For years and years to come, people will be discovering in this often tarnished city the gold of my friend's craftsmanship. And when they see the signs of its shining, they will say, "Cardinal O'Connor was here. He was always a priest. He is always present."

FT

WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ First there was the bogus charge by the John McCain campaign that George W. Bush is anti-Catholic because he spoke at Bob Jones University without publicly challenging hard-core fundamentalism's biblical exegesis relative to the papacy and the Antichrist. Anti-Catholicism is a very serious matter and is more pervasive than many are willing to admit, but I really do not think we want politicians to play at being theologians in addressing the more virulent polemics between Catholics and Protestants that have marred the last four centuries. One may believe, as I do, that the view of the Catholic Church held by folks at Bob Jones is wrongheaded and even bizarre, but that is not what is ordinarily meant by "anti-Catholic prejudice." It is, rather, a matter of grave theological error. Needless to say, those who tried to exploit the Bob Jones incident, and the media that gleefully joined in the exploitation, are not interested in theological error or truth but in scoring partisan points. The same partisan spirit drove another charge of anti-Catholicism, this time over the selection of a new Chaplain for the House of Representatives. For my sins, I was drawn into this dispute and spent hours and hours talking with parties involved and going over the pertinent documentation. It therefore came as a great relief when the man initially chosen for the post gracefully withdrew and Speaker Dennis Hastert named the widely respected Chicago priest Father Daniel Coughlin. Just for the record, however, the charge that the initial House Chaplain decision was motivated by anti-Catholicism is as plausible as the prospect of George W. Bush using the occasion of a political speech at Bob Jones University in order to challenge that school's misinterpretation of 2 Thessalonians 2:3-10. When announcing the appointment on the House floor, Hastert noted the partisan charges of anti-Catholic bigotry against him and the Republican leadership. "In all of my years in Congress, I have never seen a more cynical and more destructive political campaign. That such a campaign should be waged in connection with the selection of the House Chaplain brings shame on this House." That, too, should be on the record.

■ Everybody (well, maybe not *absolutely* everybody) knows that G. K. Chesterton said that paradox is "truth standing on her head to get attention." Dean Inge is reported to have said of GKC himself that he is "a fat clown who crucifies truth upside down." Richard Le Gallienne wrote in *The Romantic Nineties* (1926) of Oscar Wilde: "Paradox with him was only Truth standing on its head to attract attention." Not satisfied with that, our quotesmith goes on to point out that George Orwell (Eric Blair) wrote that when he was eleven years old he wanted to get the attention of a little girl, Jacintha Buddicom, who was later to have a big part in his life. She was playing with friends and they came across the field to ask him why he was standing on his head. Eric replied, "You are noticed more if you are standing on your head than if you are the right way up." So who borrowed from whom? Or maybe really neat phrases have a way of striking more than once.

■ To the joy of some and the distress of others, the last Lambeth Conference, the decennial gathering of the worldwide Anglican communion, strongly reaffirmed biblical and traditional teaching on a number of subjects, including sexual morality. American bishops were in the lead in promoting the acceptance of homosexual acts and unions. African bishops took the lead in opposing such changes. When their plans were thwarted, some Americans explained in a none too subtle way that Africans did not understand the issues and, as one American bishop suggested, were but one generation away from the jungle. Canon George Conger, editor of *Lambeth Directory*, offers some pertinent data. In Nigeria, for instance, there are sixty-two dioceses for 17.5 million Anglicans. In the U.S., there are more than twice as many bishops (139) for about one-eighth as many Episcopalians (2.4 million). Put differently, in Nigeria there is a bishop for every 282,000 people, and in the U.S. a bishop for every 17,000. African bishops, he notes, are, by and large, better educated than their Western counterparts in the U.S., Canada, England, et al. Of the forty-three Nigerian bishops for whom educational information

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is available, six hold a research degree (Ph.D.) and two hold doctorates of ministry (D.Min.). Of the 139 American bishops, three have research degrees and fifteen have a D.Min., which is not a research degree but a professional degree awarded by seminaries. At least 14 percent of Nigerian bishops and 22 percent of Indian bishops hold research degrees, compared with 2 percent of American bishops. The lowest level of academic qualifications is found among American female bishops. Barbara Harris of Massachusetts, for but one example, did not graduate from college or attend seminary. Of course a degree does not a bishop make, but this helps put into perspective the condescending contention—some think not untouched by racism—that bishops from Africa and other developing nations are not equipped to understand the questions in dispute.

■ The *Express* (London) calls him one of the "leading thinkers of our age" and invited the nimble A. N. Wilson to contribute one of their millennium essays. Wilson's books over the years proclaim in high decible certitude whatever his current convictions—from atheist, to born-again Christian, back to atheist, and now, or so it seems, maybe moving on to Islam. In "The Dying Mythology of Christ," Wilson explains that even Christians do not believe all that incredible stuff in the Bible, and people are increasingly turning to Islam, which provides "a moral and an intellectual acknowledgment of the lordship of God without the encumbrance of Christian mythological baggage. . . . That is why Christianity will decline in the next millennium and the religious hunger of the human heart will be answered by the Crescent, not by the Cross." Don't mock; this is from one of the leading thinkers of our age.

■ In reviewing a biography of Arthur Koestler, the author of *Darkness at Noon* whose heroism in exposing the horrors of communism is overshadowed in some circles by his crankiness and abuse of women, Richard Gid Powers writes: "If capturing the world's imagination and moving it to action are any measure of a writer's importance, there were moments when Arthur Koestler's voice was the most important of the century." I take his point, but to be the most important voice of the century requires a very long moment. Like a century.

■ Blacks are 12 percent of the population and account for 29 percent of abortions. Hispanics are 11 percent and account for 20 percent. With Catholics, it is 31 percent and 31 percent, while the 54 percent of women who say they are Protestant obtain 37 percent of abortions. Since most blacks are Protestant, this suggests a relatively low rate of abortion among white Protestants. The 6 percent of women who profess no religion are responsible for 24 percent of the total number of abortions. The foregoing data from an analysis by Peter Brimelow in *Forbes*, based on a survey by the Alan Guttmacher Institute.

■ Some of the clearest thinking about the family these days is being done by Professor David Popenoe of Rutgers University. In a recent issue of *Society* he asks the hard question, "Can the Nuclear Family Be Revived?" By the nuclear family, he means most importantly "voluntary lifelong monogamy." In answer to the hard question, he suggests we face up to the fact that some things cannot be changed. "Among the things we can't rid ourselves of, or change to any significant degree, are the following: the biological make-up of males and females; modern technologies; the isolated nuclear family (few people wish to return to the earlier system of living in extended families); women in the workplace (except for certain periods of their lives, such as childrearing, women are in the workplace to stay); the nature of the marital relationship (no one wants to go back to arranged marriages, patriarchy, and gross economic dependence); and material affluence (despite the possibility of temporary economic recessions and depressions)." The sphere of culture, morality, and religion, says Popenoe, is where good things can happen, and good things can be supported by public policy. Here is his checklist:

> If the nuclear family is to be revived, *we must restore the cultural importance of voluntary lifelong monogamy.* Here are the three most important focal points for such efforts:
>
> 1. Counter the Sexual Revolution.
>
> Promote sexual abstinence at least through the high school years. Most parents certainly favor this and probably most high school students do as well.
>
> Encourage women and men to lead their premarital sex lives with eventual marriage more strongly in mind. For example, what our grandmothers supposedly knew might well be true: if a woman wants a man to marry her, wisdom dictates a measure of playing hard to get.
>
> Rein in the organized entertainment industry. At one time the entertainment industry did have a moral conscience, so we know it is possible. The main levers today are

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mass protests and boycotts.

2. Promote Marriage.

Spread the word about the emotional, economic, and health benefits of lifelong monogamy, and about how it is superior to other family forms. This can be done by high schools and universities, churches, voluntary associations, and even by federal and state governments.

Educate people about the nature of modern marriage—that it is not merely finding the perfect mate and living a life of passion and romance. It is a long-term friendship between a man and a woman that requires constant effort and care plus a strong moral commitment to the institution, in addition to special communication skills.

Widely promulgate the findings about how marriage failure damages children.

Continue to privilege marriage through public policy and at the same time discourage the formation of alternative lifestyles.

3. Renew a Cultural Focus on Children.

Parents want to do what is best for their children. So do most adults. We should not let the age-old cultural priority on childrearing—the sentiment that children are our future—slip from our grasp, as now seems to be happening. A serious problem is that less than one-third of households today contain children, down from more than three-quarters in prior centuries. The task will not be easy.

Of course the last sentence is a cliché. More often than not, clichés become clichés because they are true. (And let's hope we can do better than moderate "premarital sex lives.")

■ *Our Sunday Visitor* has a fine story on Eugene Genovese's return to the Catholic Church and the reception of his wife Elizabeth Fox-Genovese. Gene, one of the most distinguished historians of our time, quoted Dostoevsky's Ivan Karamazov, "If God does not exist, everything is lawful." It came out in the story as "If God does not exist, is not everything awful?" Yes, that too.

■ For almost two hundred years, liberal theology has been haunted by the question of the connection, if any, between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith. B. A. Gerrish, a distinguished Reformation theologian, takes another crack at it in a two-part article in the *Christian Century*. Even if historical scholarship determined that Jesus never lived, it does not necessarily mean the end of faith in Christ. "Is faith really at the mercy of the latest report on the quest for the historical Jesus?" Gerrish asks. "The Christian assertion that saving faith is the gift of God in Christ Jesus is not a claim to know more about the past than historians can know. . . . It is the outward attestation of an inner conviction nurtured in the communion of saints." This is, finally, another variation on Rudolf Bultmann's affirmation of the resurrection gospel without the resurrection. Of course faith is not at the mercy of the latest report on the quest for the historical Jesus. The truly remarkable thing is that, apart from academic mavericks who are always coming up with a newly imagined Jesus, the basic picture of Jesus, his teaching and his life, presented by serious scholarship is pretty much what the Church held nineteen hundred years ago. Liberals believe they are boldly bracing themselves for the worst, but then console themselves with the thought that the worst isn't all that bad. But, if there was no Jesus, faith in Jesus the Christ is just another way of whistling in the dark. Much bolder is the orthodox acknowledgment, with St. Paul (1 Corinthians 15), that if Christ is not risen our faith is in vain. That is the radically historical nature of Christian faith that awaits its final and certain vindication from the future, when every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (Philippians 2). Contra the easy consolations of liberalism, if it is not true, be it ever so meaningful, it is not true. And if, as Christians believe, it is true, there will never be compelling evidence to the contrary.

■ Oh, for the days when Christians polemicized with rhetorical panache. For instance, there is this from a 1662 defense of the "vertuous Mediocrity" of the Church of England, written by S. Patrick of Cambridge. The established church, he wrote, stands "between the Meretricious Gaudiness of the Church of Rome and the squalid Sluttery of Fanatick Conventicles." My source is not specific as to when mediocrity lost her virtue.

■ We have taken a few hits for pointing out what can only be called the corruption of some religion-connected social services, including the huge enterprise that is Catholic Charities (CC). Now a most welcome analysis of the problem is provided by Brian C. Anderson in the very influential *City Journal*, published by the Manhattan Institute. The Manhattan Institute and its journal carry weight with policy makers around the country, and are credited with many of the successful innovations of the

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Giuliani administration in New York City. Anderson's article, "How Catholic Charities Lost Its Soul," begins this way: "As advanced social thinkers rediscover the power of faith-based institutions to rescue the down-and-out by transforming the dysfunctional worldview that often lies at the root of their difficulties, you would think that Catholic Charities USA would be a perfect model to emulate, getting the poor into the mainstream by emphasizing moral values and ethical conduct. But no: rather than trying to promote traditional values and God-fearing behavior, Catholic Charities has become over the last three decades an arm of the welfare state, with 65 percent of its $2.3 billion annual budget now flowing from government sources and little that is explicitly religious, or even values-laden, about most of the services its 1,400 member agencies and 46,000 paid employees provide. Far from being a model for reforming today's welfare state approach to helping the poor, Catholic Charities USA is one of the nation's most powerful advocates for outworn welfare state ideas, especially the idea that social and economic forces over which the individual has no control, rather than his own attitudes and behavior, are the reason for poverty. The example of this multibillion dollar charity should serve as a warning to policy makers seeking to privatize the care of the needy that they had better pick and choose prudently: for some of the institutions of civil society have been tainted with the same value-free worldview that has made most government-run poverty efforts a hindrance rather than a help to the poor." Anderson appreciates that many good things are done through the thousands of programs sponsored by CC, but even the worthy efforts, with few exceptions, fall into the social work category of "delivering services" rather than transforming lives—never mind transforming lives through moral and spiritual change. In a few places around the country, diocesan organizations of CC have preserved their integrity by not accepting government funding, but national CC is unapologetically devoted to lobbying—with millions of government and donated dollars—for an ever-expanded welfare state. This, Anderson notes, is a big change from the earlier history of CC. "Catholic Charities first announced its politicization in a wild-eyed manifesto that invokes such radical sixties icons as Malcolm X, Gloria Steinem, Herbert Marcuse, and—above all—the Marxist-inspired Liberation Theology movement that (to put it crudely) equates Jesus with Che Guevara. Ratified at Catholic Charities' annual meeting in 1972, the so-called Cadre Study totally abandoned any stress on personal responsibility in relation to poverty and other social ills. Instead, it painted America as an unjust, 'numb' country, whose oppressive society and closed economy cause people to turn to crime or drugs or prostitution. Moreover, the study asserts, individual acts of charity are useless. We must instead unearth 'the root causes of poverty and oppression' and radically reconstruct—'humanize and transform'—the social order to avert social upheaval." CC has been notably cool to the "Charitable Choice" provision of the 1996 welfare-reform law that allows "faith-based" institutions to receive government funding without compromising their religious mission. It has been a long time since saving souls—meaning the reordering of lives in relation to God and neighbor—has had a prominent place in the thinking of CC. Anderson knows that some argue that Charitable Choice will make other religious groups dependent on government and put them on the path down which CC has long gone. "But," he writes, "this argument assumes that it was government funding that corrupted CC. In fact, CC officials already sincerely believed that government entitlements are the best way to help the needy when they began accepting government funding." It is up to religious institutions to preserve their religious integrity, and the new provisions in law help them to do precisely that. On the other hand, those who believe that charity is a dirty word (some CC officials are embarrassed by its retention in the title of the organization), and that the transformation of lives must give way to the transforming of an inherently unjust and racist "system," view it as no loss of integrity when they become, in effect, government agencies for the expansion of government entitlements and controls. Defenders of CC and similar, albeit smaller, organizations in the Protestant and Jewish communities will protest that they do a lot of good. That is true, and quite beside the point of Anderson's critique. They do great damage by helping to perpetuate the excesses of welfarism and, even more important, by severely compromising, if not betraying, the spiritual and moral commitment that brought them into being in the first place.

■ I was definitely going to do something else this morning. A dozen deadlines clamored for attention, and there were all those calls I had promised to return. I blame Philip Smith of Oakland, California, a longtime reader who is editor at *Octavo*, an outfit that is putting out digital editions of rare books. He sent along a CD-ROM of a sixteenth-century book of hours, *Horae Beatae Mariae ad usum Romanum*, from the Rosenwald Collection at the Library of Congress. My colleague Dan Moloney showed me how I could run it on my Mac, and there went the better part of the morning. It really was the better part. The

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experience is that of having this rare and exceedingly beautiful book all to yourself for as long as you want. Even better, your computer can zoom in, magnifying the text and exquisite paintings for the most minute examination. It is quite extraordinary, and this is only one of many rare books that *Octavo* has on CD-ROM. For information, contact them at 580 Second St., Oakland, California 94607 or www.octavo.com. And now, in a frame of mind pleasurably edified, back to what I was supposed to do this morning.

■ Jody Bottum wrote in these pages that the killings at Columbine high school and the martyr-like (at least) witness of Cassie Bernall could be a turning point in our moral culture ("Awakening at Littleton," August/September 1999). Jean Bethke Elshtain, another frequent contributor to these pages, is skeptical about that. Reviewing *She Said Yes*, the book by Misty Bernall, Cassie's mother, Elshtain writes in the *New Republic*: "The early martyrs were taken up, over the span of centuries, and made part of a highly complicated intellectual and institutional framework. Such traditions require above all a capacity that we lack: attention over time. But nothing durable will come from all the pink-tinged websites. . . . The 'Cassie Pledge,' as with so much of the Cassie material on the Internet, purports to express a spirituality that will last a lifetime. But last, how? Absent the sustaining forms of spiritual discipline, of any discipline, Cassie Bernall's death has become just the latest splash in the stream of American spiritual self-help." "Political and cultural change is effected," says Elshtain, "when people hang in for the long haul, and institutions—places of work, schools, governments, families—are thereby transformed. Websites and rallies will not do it. Conversion experiences, without the sturdy wisdom of traditions and institutions, will not suffice." She is right, of course, and I cannot imagine that Jody Bottum would disagree.

■ "Catholics have become a bridge church in the ecumenical movement in ironic ways," observes Brother Jeffrey Gros, Associate Director of Ecumenism for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (NCCB). In a thoughtful survey of developments in *Ecumenical Trends*, Br. Gros appreciates the historic importance of initiatives such as "Evangelicals and Catholics Together" (ECT), but also worries about Catholicism becoming a "wedge church" that pits relations with evangelicals against relations with the oldline (he says "classic") Protestant groups. He writes: "Catholic strong commitment to orthodoxy in doctrine, a certain allergy to the Enlightenment and its political and epistemological implications, and an ethical tradition that is strong on sexuality and pro-life issues, gives it an affinity to the evangelical culture and convictions. On the other hand, its scholarly critical tradition, its sacramental and social sense of solidarity, and its commitment to a broad ecumenical program, rooted in common baptism, common Scriptures, as well as the goal of full communion, places it squarely in the tradition of the ecumenical churches gathered in the conciliar movement. With the World Council member churches it shares the goal of full communion in faith, eucharistic life, mission, and witness." Br. Gros' concern is legitimate, although one wonders if he does not overestimate the theological and ecclesial solidity of some, if not most, of the member churches of, for instance, the World Council of Churches. In addition, he speaks of ECT "building on the more official work" of Catholic dialogues with evangelicals, Pentecostalists, and Holiness groups. In his view, ECT is an instance of the "reception" of these official dialogues. That, I would suggest, is not quite right. While he correctly notes that ECT has brought the questions of Christian unity and cooperation home to evangelicals, the actual work of ECT is decidedly independent of the official dialogues. While the participants in ECT are aware of those dialogues, ECT itself might best be viewed as a theological scouting party that is exploring possibilities that might later be incorporated into the work of the official dialogues. This is also the understanding of ECT among responsible parties in Rome. That being said, however, Br. Gros' essay is a helpful contribution to understanding the ways in which the Catholic Church is engaged in "differentiated ecumenism," and his caution that this engagement must always be viewed as a bridge rather than as a wedge is well taken.

■ The British journal *History Today* recently printed an article claiming that many of the most prominent pioneers of feminism—Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Alice Paul, and Mary Wollstonecraft, among others—not only refused to support abortion but aggressively denounced it as "the ultimate in the exploitation of women." Such an article, in such a publication, in such a culture? Perhaps it is a straw in the wind, the UK wind at least. It is certainly an argument that the Feminists for Life have been making for a long time. The recent issue of their magazine, the *American Feminist*, contains a vigorous argument by Rosemary Oelrich Bottcher, who claims that abortion is nothing less than "a betrayal of feminism." "In rejecting both violence and the

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concept of humans owning other humans," she writes, "the suffragists also rejected abortion. Human worth, in their view, was not based upon size (physical size had always been one supposed reason for male superiority), 'wantedness' (women were wanted only in[as]much as they could be controlled by men), or dependency. . . . All feminists share the vision of a world in which violence directed against women is not only legally condemned but also regarded as both socially and morally unthinkable. As we work together toward that vision, pro-life feminists hope that our sisters who promote abortion will one day realize that unborn children are not property either and that violence against them is equally unacceptable. Let us not have to spend another 150 years establishing that the children we bear are also persons." This is feminism rightly understood, and it is most admirable. To find out more about Feminists for Life, write to them at 733 15th Street, NW, Suite 1100, Washington, D.C. 20005, or visit their website at www.feministsforlife.org.

■ I usually find myself in agreement with that astute critic, Hilton Kramer, editor of the *New Criterion*. But I suspect he does not have it quite right in his review of the remarkable Tilman Riemenschneider exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He notes that one enters the exhibition by way of the Greek sculpture galleries. "The spirit of classical humanism that we encounter in the Greek sculpture galleries transports us to a realm of heroic earthly life in which the human physique is exalted as an object to be admired and idealized. In the galleries devoted to Riemenschneider's sculptures, however, we find ourselves immersed in the shrouded interior world of medieval Christian piety. The one is a realm of light and worldly aspiration; the other plunges us into the shadows of religious agony and the ordeals of redemption. Both embody ideas that have shaped our own civilization, yet the stark polarities of mind and material circumstance which they represent remain difficult to reconcile." He observes that "the Greek sculptors seemed to entertain no doubts or anxieties" about the status of man and the glory of the human condition, as is evident in the exuberant treatment of nudity, which is conspicuously absent from the fifteenth-century devotional wood sculpture of Riemenschneider. "When we exit this exhibition and retrace our course through the Greek sculpture galleries on our way out of the museum," Kramer writes, "we are bound to feel a sense of release and exhilaration. For we have passed out of shadows into the light." Stark polarities? Perhaps. Or maybe it is the case that we have learned through terrible experience that the only light to be trusted is the light on the far side of the shadows. Hilton Kramer is not usually on the side of liberationisms ("a sense of release and exhilaration") that flee from that wisdom.

■ Professor Vincent Crapanzano of City University of New York writes in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* against the religious insurgency in our culture. "Christian Fundamentalism is only a part of the story. Literalism in the United States is far more widespread than most realize or are even prepared to accept." Well, we can hardly accept it if we don't realize it, can we? "Indeed," Crapanzano writes, "it can be argued that the moral idiom is beginning to replace the psychological" in our public discourse. Literalism, he opines, may be a male thing. That "would account for the correlation we find between literalism and the denigration of women. Women are—they have to be—held in place, the way meaning, literal meaning, has to be." This is vintage Crapanzano and is, I am sure, not to be taken literally.

■ Oldline Protestantism seems to be in a state of perpetual identity crisis. This is displayed in a bundle of essays edited by Douglas Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger, *Re-forming the Center: American Protestantism, 1900 to the Present* (Eerdmans). This from a review in the *Christian Century* by Milton J. Coalter of the Presbyterian seminary in Louisville: "Searching for alternative descriptors of the 'center,' the editors recall Peggy Shriver's suggestion that we regard American Protestantism as 'a Protestant archipelago, a circle of islands connected together under water,' and Randall Balmer's proposal that what we are observing is 'an evolving geography of religious tectonic plates in creative collision.' Both images carry promise. But if Protestants are connected 'under water,' what exactly is the theological, pietistic, and/or ethical ground that connects them, and if they are 'in creative collision,' what motivates their colliding? Despite the problems with the word, Jacobsen and Trollinger state, 'Still, for now we retain "center," albeit a center that is construed in a non-hegemonic, multi-polar, multi-dimensional, and nonhierarchical fashion.'" In sum, a thoroughly uncentered center.

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Sources: "Making Peace by the Blood of His Cross," London *Times*, April 2, 1999.

WHILE WE'RE AT IT: On Chesterton, Orwell, etc., and use of paradox, *Quote/Unquote Newsletter*, October 4, 1999. On most recent Lambeth Conference, personal correspondence with Canon Conger. A. N. Wilson on Christ, London *Express*, October 21, 1999. Richard Gid Powers on Arthur Koestler, *National Review*, December 20, 1999. Statistics on religion and abortion from Alan Guttmacher Institute and used by Peter Brimelow, *Forbes*, October 18, 1999. "Can the Nuclear Family Be Revived?" by David Popenoe, *Society*, July/August 1999. On misquotation of Dostoevsky, *Our Sunday Visitor*, December 12, 1999. B. A. Gerrish on liberal theology, *Christian Century*, October 13, 1999. On the "vertuous Mediocrity," *Quote/Unquote Newsletter*, October 4, 1999. Brian C. Anderson on "How Catholic Charities Lost Its Soul," *City Journal*, Winter 2000. Jean Bethke Elshtain on Cassie Bernall, *New Republic*, January 17, 2000. Brother Jeffrey Gros on Catholic ecumenism, *Ecumenical Trends*, January 2000. On abortion as anti-feminist, *History Today*, August 1999, and *American Feminist*, Winter 1999/2000. Hilton Kramer on the Tilman Riemenschneider exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, *New York Observer*, February 21, 2000. Vincent Crapanzano on fundamentalism and literalism, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, February 11, 2000. Douglas Jacobsen and William Vance Trollinger's *Reforming the Center* reviewed by Milton J. Coalter, *Christian Century*, October 27, 1999.

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